



# Downtown Design Guide

City of San Antonio



# Downtown Design Guide: Urban Design Standards and Guidelines

City of San Antonio

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# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Downtown San Antonio has become an important focus for commercial, housing, and cultural activity in the last decade. The buildings that comprise the area reflect the efforts of citizens who have worked, lived and prospered in the area. These guidelines provide a means of encouraging consistent new infill development while building on downtown's existing urban fabric.

### A. POLICY UNDERLYING THE GUIDELINES

The Mayor's initiative, SA 2020 for the City of San Antonio, was adopted in September 2012. The purpose of SA 2020 is to galvanize the community into a passionate, focused, and sustained action in order to achieve shared goals that will transform San Antonio into a world-class city by the year 2020.

The Strategic Framework Plan for the Center City, adopted in 2011, sets out key goals, targets and strategies to achieve the SA 2020. Shortly thereafter, HR&A Advisors developed the Downtown Implementation Plan for the City of San Antonio, providing recommendations for the financing, planning, management and regulation of the Center City's growth, based on the recommendations of the Strategic Framework Plan. It focuses on key sets of recommendations, one being Planning and Regulations.

Planning and Regulations refer to land use, density and urban design standards for private development and a means for enforcing design standards for private development. The Implementation Plan called for:

- A rigorous level of design quality applied to building ground floors, open spaces, building construction and materials.
- Consistent design standards and guidelines for projects that receive public funding, tax abatements, or other forms of incentives.
- A means of enforcing design standards for private development

and for projects receiving City incentives.

- A single set of user-friendly design standards and guidelines that outline common approaches to urban design.

The 1997 City of San Antonio Master Plan Policies established a goal to enhance the City's urban form. The policy also states, the City of San Antonio would develop urban design policies and standards which integrate and coordinate planning for historic and cultural resources, public facilities and services, and private development, infrastructure, transportation, arts and cultural resources, libraries, parks and recreation, health and human service facilities. The intent is to create and adopt urban design guidelines and standards that will implement the Master Plan and enhance the quality of life in San Antonio.

The quality of urban design and building design should be regulated by the City, for both public and private development projects, and for projects receiving City incentives. Historically, no new infill uniform design standards and guidelines have been in place in the downtown to provide guidance to developers on a range of urban and building design issues including: the building envelope; the character and quality of materials; and the placement of building utilities. The lack of design review tools has led to an inconsistent level of design for recent projects, making the pathway for project approvals uncertain at times.

### B. AREAS TO WHICH THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDE APPLIES/ RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER REGULATIONS

The Downtown Design Guide: Urban Design Standards and Guidelines ("Downtown Design Guide"), supplements the Unified Development Code (UDC) provisions, and applies to all projects on property zoned "D" Downtown Zoning District, except:

- Properties subject to an adopted Form Based Code; Design Overlay District other than a River Improvement Overlay District; a Streetscape Plan; or Development Agreements which shall be subject to those applicable

provisions take precedence over the Downtown Design Guide where there is a conflict.

- Properties that are zoned historic either individually or within a locally designated historic district, regardless of any additional associated zoning.
- River Improvement Overlay properties but, only to the extent that River Improvement Overlay regulations address the proposed design. Design concepts not covered by River improvement Overlay regulations shall comply with the Downtown Design Guide.
- Where there is a conflict with other applicable city code requirements the more restrictive standards shall apply. Where the conflict is between standards of equal restrictiveness, the standards of the Downtown Design Guide shall take precedence.

Where the other UDC regulations are more restrictive than these Guidelines, and a request has been made to deviate from the UDC to conform to the Downtown Design Guide, the applicant shall request a variance in accordance with the UDC.

### C. APPLICATION OF DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDE TO PROJECTS AND DEFINITION OF PROJECT

The Downtown Design Guide is intended to provide guidance for creating a livable and sustainable Downtown. The Downtown Design Guide is intended to be a means of balancing the traditional qualities of the downtown with the demands of contemporary use. It includes both standards (requirements) and guidelines (suggestions).

The Downtown Design Guide is organized by first identifying the principle in **GREEN BOLD ITALIC** followed by standards in **BLUE BOLD** and Guidelines in *ITALIC*.

**Standards typically use the word “shall”, an active verb (such as, “provide” or “install”), a clear directive (such as “are not permitted” or “are required”).** *Guidelines typically use the word “should” or “consider.”* **Projects must comply with standards and** *are strongly encouraged to comply with guidelines.*

In the spirit of affording maximum creativity, a project need not adhere to the letter of every guideline in the Downtown Design Guide. A project that complies with the Downtown Design Guide standards and demonstrates a clear alternative approach that achieves the intent of the guidelines, will be recognized as a valid alternative.

For the purposes of the Downtown Design Guide, a “project” is the construction or erection, or addition to any building or structure, on a lot located in whole or in part, within the area shown in Figure 1-1, which requires the issuance of a grading permit, foundation permit, building permit, or land use permit. Projects excepted from the Downtown Design Guide are:

1. Demolition;
2. Exterior alterations or additions to a historic structure;
3. Exterior remodeling of any other existing building, unless extensive work such that, the aggregate value of the work in any one 24 month period, is greater than 50 percent of the replacement value of the building or structure before the alterations or addition as determined by the Development Services Department;
4. Interior remodeling of any existing building, or the change of use of a building or land, or the relocation of an existing building.

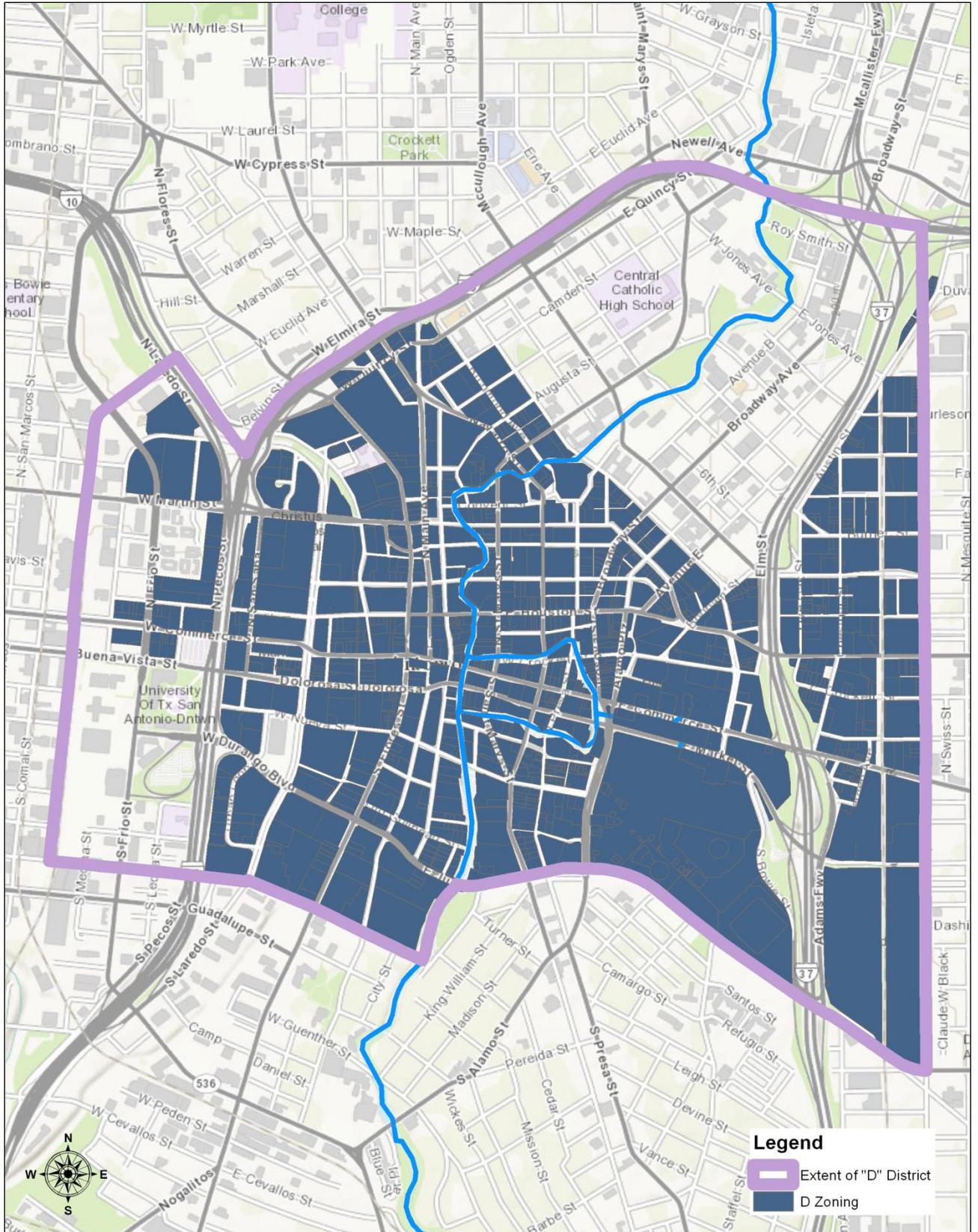


Fig 1.1 Map



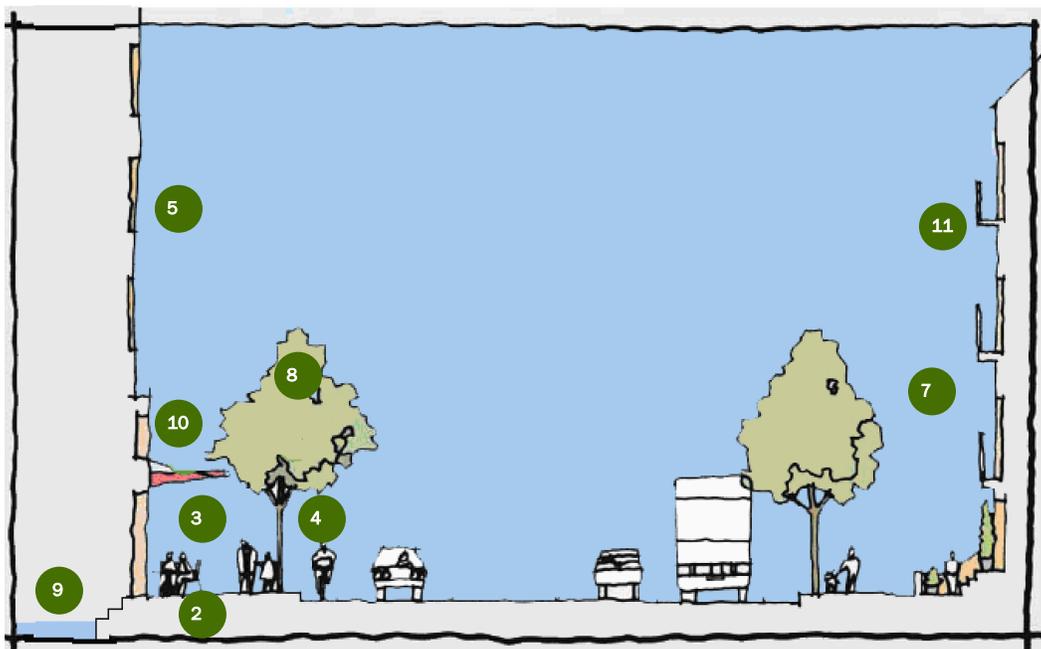
#### D. HOW TO USE THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDE

The Downtown Design Guide encourages Downtown San Antonio to develop as a more sustainable community. To achieve this goal, good choices must be made at all levels of planning and design - from all development decisions to building massing and choices of material - with an emphasis on walkability and the making of great streets, districts and neighborhoods.

The focus of the Downtown Design Guide is on the relationship of buildings to the street, including sidewalk treatment, character of the building as it adjoins the sidewalk and connections to transit, as illustrated in Figure 1.2. The successful treatment of these key features, coupled with particular attention to the details of a project in the first 30-40 vertical feet, forms the basis for providing high quality development at a human scale. Figure 1.1 shows the zone of development on which the standards and guidelines focus.

Each chapter in this document helps explain the city's expectation for future high quality development in the Downtown. The breakdown of each Chapter is provided here for ease of use:

Chapter 2 provides guidelines and standards for sidewalks and setbacks. Chapter 3 establishes key design characteristics for ground floor street walls. Chapter 4 addresses parking and access, including alleys. Chapter 5 focuses on building massing and street wall treatment. Chapter 6 speaks to on-site open space; Chapter 7 discusses architectural detail; Chapter 8 focuses on streetscape improvements; Chapter 9 denominates River Walk guidelines and standards; Chapter 10 address signage; Chapter 11 deals with sustainable design; and Chapter 12 applies to public art.



**Fig 1.2 Focus** of the Design Guide. This diagram shows the zone of development on which the standards and guidelines focus. Numbers correspond to the Chapter of this document in which each topic addressed:

- |                            |                             |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2. Sidewalks and Setbacks  | 8. Streetscape Improvements |
| 3. Ground Floor Treatment  | 9. San Antonio River Walk   |
| 4. Parking and Access      | 10. Signage                 |
| 5. Massing and Street Wall | 11. Sustainable Design      |
| 6. On-Site Open Space      | 12. Public Art              |
| 7. Architectural Detail    |                             |

## E. FOCUSED URBAN STREETS

During the review of all applicable development projects in the downtown, the reviewer is directed to the map below to ascertain the degree of design scrutiny appropriate for the type of street the development is located on. Appropriate levels of design scrutiny will be applied for reviewing compliance with the guidelines provided the design standards are met.

In downtown, there are streets that deserve a higher level of design intervention for private development proposals. These streets are called “pedestrian oriented” and as such

should exhibit the highest level of quality design. On the other hand, there are streets less prominent and their design solutions may reflect a more relaxed scrutiny given their “Service Street” designation. Transit friendly streets could incorporate a high level of design, but not as much as pedestrian oriented streets. Some streets are a mixture of types and as such are not designated. HDRC has the discretion to ascertain the correct level of design scrutiny with the map acting solely as a guide.



**F. UNDERSTANDING THE DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS**

The Downtown Design Guide requires design review of construction for properties zoned “D” District. The proposed project must be reviewed by the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) staff that will make a recommendation to the Historic and Design Review Commission (HDRC). For affected properties, the Downtown Design Guide review process must be completed and a recommendation obtained from the HDRC before actions can be taken or permits can be issued by the Development Services Department or other City departments.

As a part of the review process, the DPCD provides a recommendation to the HDRC regarding the project. After review, the HDRC may recommend approval, denial or approval with conditions of a project. After receiving the HDRC recommendation, the Director of Planning and Community Development (or other city manager designee) shall either issue or deny the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness (CoA).

**Historic and Design Review Commission Review Process**

Once a completed CoA application for development is submitted to the DPCD, the following process begins:

- Upon submission to the DPCD, a DPCD staff member will explain the details of a typical HDRC meeting to the applicant.
- The DPCD staff reviews the application to determine completeness. If a proposed project meets the standards and substantially complies with the guidelines, the DPCD will prepare a Design Review Memorandum.
  - If a downtown infill development proposal meets the standards and the intent and spirit of the guidelines, the Memorandum in support of the application and recommend approval to the HDRC. Routine items will be placed on the HDRC Consent Agenda. Any member of the HDRC may “pull” an item off

**REVIEWING BODIES**

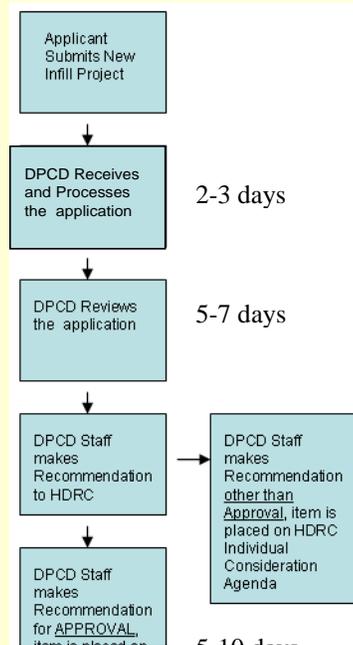
**Certificate of Appropriateness – Historic and Design Review Commission**

An application for a Certificate of Appropriateness must be reviewed by the Historic and Design Review Commission, and may not be approved through an Administrative Certificate of Appropriateness.

**Board of Adjustment (BOA)**

The Board of Adjustment hears and decides appeals of administrative decisions; hears and decides special exceptions in those specific instances authorized by the Unified Development Code; and authorizes variances in specific cases, subject to evidence of a property-related hardship.

**Process Diagram**



\*Times and days are subject to change pending meeting days and times of HDRC.

the Consent Agenda for discussion or a full review by the HDRC. If a proposal is considered complicated, potentially controversial or not in the spirit of the Downtown Design Guide, the item will be placed on HDRC's individual consideration agenda for full review.

- If DPCD staff recommends anything other than approval as submitted, DPCD staff will collaborate with the applicant to decide whether or not the application should be withdrawn, continued, or revised. Applications will be withheld from HDRC consideration if the request is 1.) In violation of the UDC; or 2.) Contains factual misrepresentations, errors, or omissions.
- The applicant or a representative, such as the project architect or contractor, should attend the designated HDRC meeting. The HDRC may recommend approval, approval with conditions, denial, continuance, or send the application to the Design Review subcommittee.
- If HDRC recommends denial of an application, it becomes inactive until it is resubmitted in an acceptable form. (Applicant has six (6) months to resubmit a withdrawn application, or application will be closed)
- An applicant seeking a variance to the standards shall submit an application for a CoA concurrently or prior to submitting an application for a variance. The application for the CoA shall be processed and forwarded to the HDRC for a recommendation. The Director shall forward the recommendations of DPCD and HDRC to the Board of Adjustment for consideration of the request for a variance.
- If the request is denied by HDRC, the applicant may submit revised plans to DPCD and the HDRC that address the reasons for denial or appeal the decision of the Director to the Board

## CONSULTATION

### CityDesignCenter– Design Consultation

The CityDesignCenter provides informal and non-binding design consultation on an as-requested basis for applicants seeking advice on proposed development projects. The CityDesignCenter offers a good opportunity for early feedback on how to design projects that will comply with these guidelines—before applicants have invested significant time and money on specific plans. CityDesignCenter staff is available during normal business hours to discuss projects and provide initial feedback.

## TYPES OF HDRC REVIEWS

### Conceptual

Conceptual review examines general design ideas and principles (such as scale and setback). Specific design details reviewed at this stage are not binding. Rather, it alerts an applicant to potential issues and may provide the applicant with an assurance to proceed with more detailed design and construction details before coming back for final approval.

### Final

The final HDRC review examines all project elements, including specific design details. Final recommendation is dependent upon a project's compliance with all applicable standards of the Downtown Design Guide, any applicable district-specific standards and the Unified Development Code.

of Adjustment (“BOA”) within 30 days of the decision.

- If there are issues or questions about the request that cannot be resolved without a visit to the project site by the HDRC, the request may be sent to a committee. This subcommittee consists of approximately 3-5 commissioners and members of DPCD staff. The applicant or a representative should attend the committee meeting and will be notified of the meeting date in advance. Such meetings usually occur during the interval between the HDRC meeting at which a request is referred to committee, and the next regularly scheduled HDRC meeting.
- If an application is approved as submitted, the applicant will receive the approval document, the COA, in the mail and a PDF will be e-mailed to the applicant. The certificates are mailed to applicants within 10 days of the HDRC meeting when approval has been recommended. If needed immediately, a copy can be obtained at the DPCD during regular office hours. Provided that all other city code requirements and regulations relating to the project are satisfied, building permits for projects that do not require plan review may be obtained through the Development Services Department immediately after receiving the CoA from the DPCD.

#### **G. AMENDMENTS TO THE DOWNTOWN DESIGN GUIDE**

The Downtown Design Guide may be amended as necessary by the City Council.

#### **H. DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR CREATING A LIVABLE DOWNTOWN**

The following principles are a compilation of goals, policies and other strategies from various source documents prepared for Downtown San Antonio.

##### **1. Design on a Human Scale:**

Compact, pedestrian-friendly communities allow residents to walk to shops, services, cultural resources, and jobs and can reduce traffic congestion and benefit people's health.

##### **2. Provide Choices:**

People want variety in housing, shopping, recreation, transportation, and employment. Variety creates lively neighborhoods and accommodates residents in different stages of their lives.

##### **3. Encourage Mixed-Use Development:**

Integrating different land uses and varied building types create vibrant, pedestrian-friendly and diverse communities.

##### **4. Preserve Urban Centers:**

Restoring, revitalizing, and infilling urban centers take advantage of existing streets, services and buildings and avoid the need for new infrastructure. This helps to curb sprawl and promote stability for city neighborhoods.

##### **5. Vary Transportation Options:**

Giving people the option of walking, biking and using public transit, in addition to driving, reduces traffic congestion, protects the environment and encourages physical activity.

##### **6. Build Vibrant Public Spaces:**

Citizens need welcoming, well-defined public places to stimulate face-to-face interaction, collectively celebrate and mourn, encourage civic participation, admire public art, and gather for public events.

##### **7. Create a Neighborhood Identity:**

A "sense of place" gives neighborhoods a unique character, enhances the walking environment, and creates pride in the community.

##### **8. Protect Environmental Resources:**

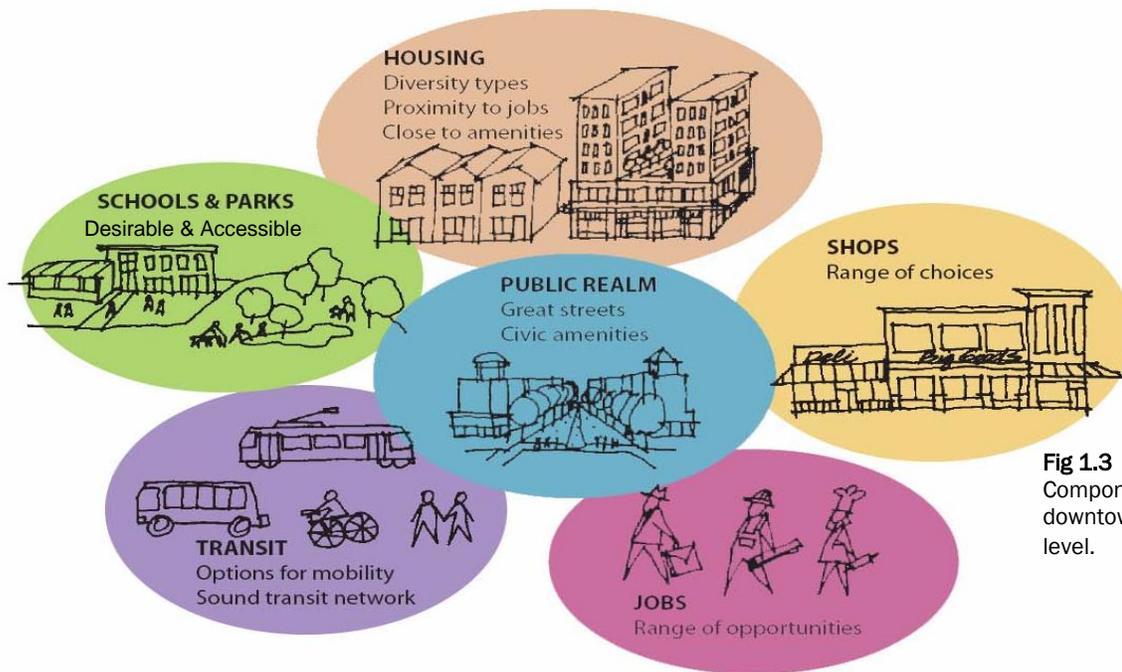
A well-designed balance of nature and development preserves natural systems, protects waterways from pollution, reduces air pollution, and protects property values.

##### **9. Conserve Landscapes:**

Open space, farms, and wildlife habitat are essential for environmental, recreational, and cultural reasons.

##### **10. Design Matters:**

Design excellence is the foundation of successful and healthy communities.

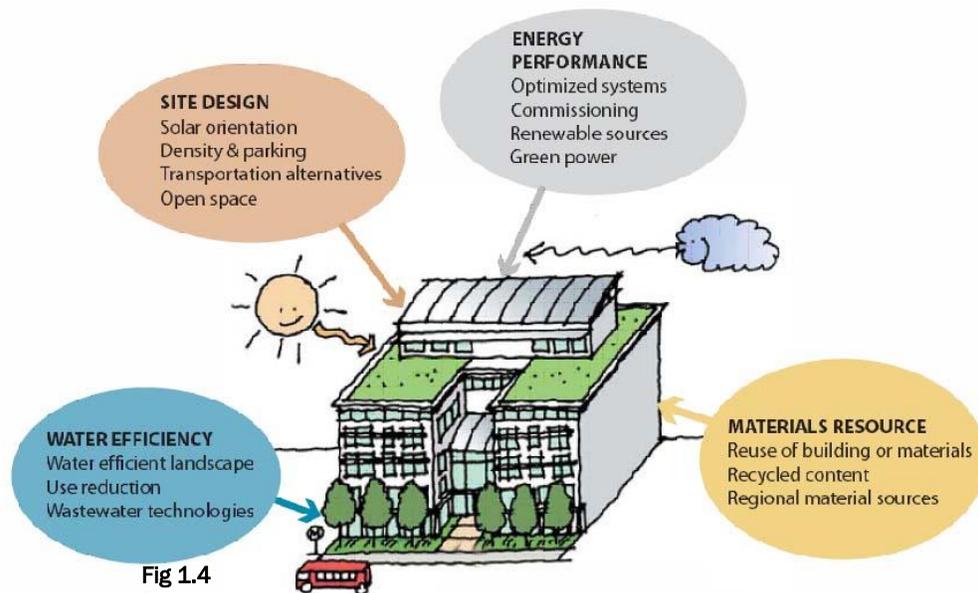


**Fig 1.3**  
Components of a livable  
downtown at the neighborhood  
level.

There are several components for ensuring that a livable Downtown is successful as seen in Figure 1.3 and 1.4.

**Urban and Neighborhood Design**

- **Employment Opportunities:** Maintain and enhance the concentration of jobs, in both the public and private sectors, which provides the foundation of a sustainable Downtown.
- **Housing Choices:** Provide a variety of housing types and price levels that offer a full range of choices, including home ownership, and bring people of diverse ages, ethnicities, household sizes and incomes into daily interaction.
- **Transportation Choices:** Enable people to move around easily on foot, by bicycle, transit, and auto. Accommodate cars, but less so than in the suburbs, and allow people to live easily without one.
- **Shops and Services within Walking Distance:** Provide shops and services for everyday needs, including groceries, day care, cafes and restaurants, banks and drug stores, within an easy walk from home.
- **Complete Streets:** Design streets not just for vehicles, but as usable outdoor space for walking, bicycling, transit and visual enjoyment.
- **Gathering Places:** Provide places for people to socialize, including parks, sidewalks, courtyards and plazas that



**Fig 1.4**  
Design considerations to achieve a  
more sustainable building.

are combined with shops and services. Program places for events and gatherings.

- **Active Recreation Areas:** Provide public recreational open space, including joint use open space, within walking distance of residents.
- **Culture:** Incorporate artwork and cultural lifestyle, such as outdoor performances.

### Building Design

- Identify individual projects as they are the “building blocks” of great streets and neighborhoods. This requires particular attention to the way the building meets the sidewalk, providing a transition to pedestrian scale and elements that activate the street.
- Respect historically significant districts and buildings, including massing and scale, and neighborhood context, while at the same time, encouraging innovative architectural design that expresses the identity and authenticity of an urban San Antonio.
- Accommodate vehicular access and parking in a way that respects pedestrians and public spaces and contributes to the quality of the neighborhood.
- Express an underlying design philosophy (a “big idea”) that is articulated and supported by all aspects of building design, and initially conveyed through design sketches, drawings and specifications.
- Incorporate universal design requirements into new infill projects.

*“Sustainability is an overarching goal of the Downtown Design Guide and essential to the concept of a livable Downtown.”*

### I. ENCOURAGING CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

The Downtown Design Guide provides both specific and broad suggestions, which, if followed, could result in “great buildings” which help create “great streets.” While the definition of “great” varies with individual opinion, there are fundamentals of architectural design (both traditional and modern) that, in most cases, contribute to the creation of great architecture. Judgment of what is appropriate and



Fig 1.5 The Vistana



Fig 1.6 Cevallos Lofts



Fig 1.7 Judson Candy Lofts

ultimately acceptable will be made through the review process.

Exceptions to the specific guidelines may be entertained, provided that a project achieves the overall principles of the Downtown Design Guide. For example, a proposed site may be genuinely unique and require special consideration, or an innovative architectural design may bring more value to a site and to Downtown than a purely contextual solution.

Typically, buildings are seen as great contextual solutions when they appear similar to other buildings in the neighborhood as seen in Figures 1.5 through 1.7. However, contextual solutions can also reinterpret the existing character and features within a city block, and recompose them in a cleverly modern interpretation. This can result in new projects that are aesthetically unique and represent excellent building design in the neighborhood context.

Most architecture that is considered memorable is ground-breaking in its design approach and sometimes contrasts sharply with its surrounding environment. Such projects usually bring the cache of a well recognized architect whose work is based on a strong theoretical design practice. These projects are often elevated above normal considerations, and exceptions to the Guidelines can be entertained because the design meets or exceeds the principles as long as the project meets the standards of the Design Guidelines.

Great buildings help to sustain neighborhoods and maintain a healthy economic environment. Such buildings are designed by a collaborative team of architects, engineers, artists, planners and designers through a process of innovation and creativity. These professionals are experienced at integrating planning principles into projects so as to product contemporary solutions that contribute to the richness of Downtown's built landscape. These projects, in turn, contribute to a great community of great buildings.

The following two pages provide illustrations of best practices addressing how various urban design elements and characteristics such as local materials, street interface, architectural treatments to buildings and on-site features can be considered in the design of downtown projects.

# BEST PRACTICES

## Downtown San Antonio

### RIVERWALK/ STREET INTERFACE

pedestrian connection between river and street level

river level facade composed primarily of transparent glass

simple curves and handcrafted detailing

active uses on river and mezzanine levels

slight elevation change provides separation between the walkway and seating area

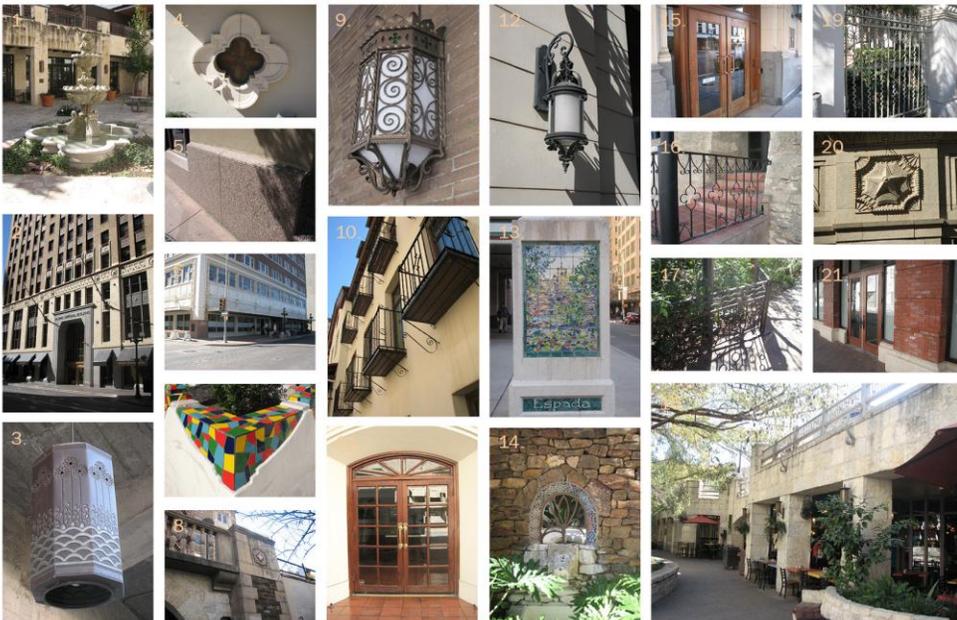


restaurants are located on the river and mezzanine levels

buildings are sited to define active spaces and provide pedestrian connections to the mezzanine level and the street



### AUTHENTICITY: LOCAL MATERIALS



1. quatrefoil fountain
2. smooth cut limestone base, brown brick mid-section
3. unique pendant light cover
4. quatrefoil window
5. granite kick plate
6. smooth cut limestone base, red brick mid-section
7. colorful tile
8. decorative element, limestone arch
9. unique light cover on brown brick
10. ornamental metal railings
11. wood doors, saltillo tile
12. unique light cover on smooth cut limestone
13. hand painted tile mission depiction
14. fountain in dry stack sandstone
15. wood doors with side lights
16. ornamental metal railing, saltillo tile
17. ornamental metal railing with river depiction
18. rough cut limestone with decorative elements
19. ornamental metal fence
20. star image in smooth cut limestone
21. red brick with limestone base

# BEST PRACTICES

## Downtown San Antonio

### PARKING STRUCTURE: ARCHITECTURAL TREATMENT

external skin covers basic concrete structure of ramps, walls, and columns

elevator and stairs are located on the primary pedestrian corner and highlighted architecturally

provide active ground floor uses along the street frontage



### GROUND FLOOR COMMERCIAL: ARCHITECTURAL TREATMENT

wall openings comprise at least 70% of the facade

integrated canopy defines and adds comfort to the pedestrian space

local, durable materials utilized on the ground floor

recessed entryways maintain rhythm



### ON-SITE OPEN SPACE

located on the ground level and inviting to the general public

lined with ground floor restaurants or retail

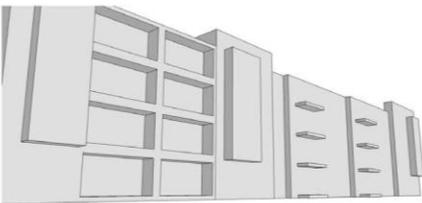
enhanced landscaping & lighting

receptacles for waste and recycling

fountain serves as focal point; seating creates gathering area



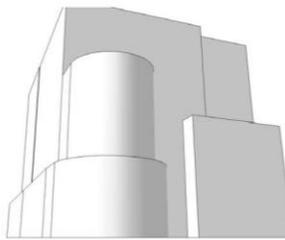
### HORIZONTAL VARIATION



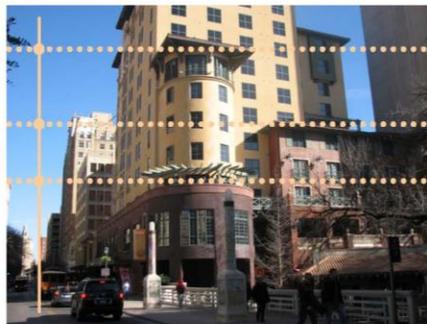
details and materials are varied horizontally to provide scale and three dimensional qualities



### VERTICAL VARIATION



building was designed with towers of varying heights to break-up the vertical mass and differentiate lower floor from upper floor functions



### INFILL BUILDINGS

new development reflects historic relationship to street, 1st floor plate height, & window configuration

transom windows  
historic projecting blade sign

bays break-up horizontal mass



# Chapter 2 SIDEWALKS AND SETBACKS

## A. SIDEWALKS

The City of San Antonio has the opportunity to reinforce downtown as a distinct living and entertaining environment: a pedestrian precinct, where pedestrians share the downtown with automobiles and public transportation. The mix of traffic can provide a sense of excitement and actually enhance the pedestrian’s experience if these other elements are kept in balance. Paramount could be providing a sense of comfort for pedestrians. This includes ensuring that sidewalks are designed to facilitate walking and that public spaces are created which are lively and inviting.

*Design sidewalks that are walkable and accommodate a variety of uses.*

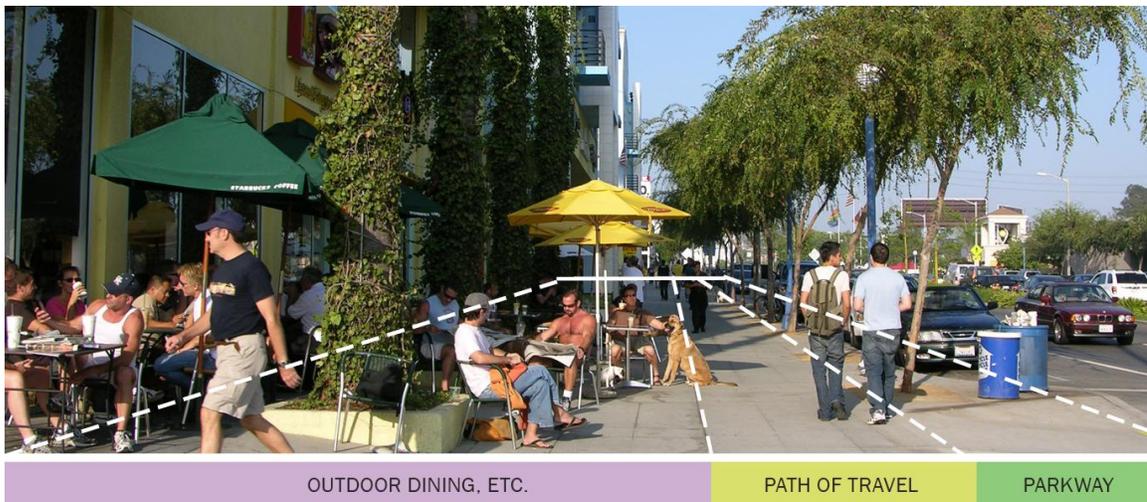
1. Provide a minimum 72 inch wide continuous pedestrian path of travel as seen in Figure 2.1.
2. Provide an 18 inch to 24 inch wide access or utility zone next to the curb, which includes the six (6) inch curb and 12 inch wide decorative granite or brick edge band adjacent to the back of curb.
3. Outdoor dining may occur on any portion of the paved sidewalk provided a minimum wide (72 inches) continuous clear path of public travel is maintained and obtain proper permits

*Design sidewalks to accommodate and support large street trees and collect storm water, and allow for continuous parkways where appropriate.*

4. Provide continuous landscaped and hardscaped area, commonly referred to as “parkway,” adjacent to the curb on predominantly non-commercial streets. The continuous landscaped and hardscaped parkways should be designed to collect and retain or treat storm runoff.
5. In an ideal urban tree canopy, adjacent trees at street maturity generally touch one another. Therefore, typical tree spacing is generally 30 to 50 feet apart, depending upon the tree species.
6. Plant or replant street trees to shade and shelter the pedestrian from sun, rain and traffic, and to improve the quality of the air and storm water runoff.

*Where it is not feasible to plant street trees in continuous landscaped parkways, (i.e. Ultra Urban Streets such as Commerce Street) provide large street wells with gap-graded soil beneath the sidewalk.*

7. Trees shall be planted in tree wells within tree grates that are at least 5 feet long and a minimum of 5’ feet wide.
8. Where tree wells and parkways would conflict with existing basements, underground vaults, historic paving materials, or other existing features



**Fig 2.1**  
Example showing the parkway along the curb, the clear path of travel and use of the remaining sidewalk for outdoor dining.

that cannot be easily relocated the tree well and parkway design should be modified by the design to eliminate such conflicts. Parking meters and sign posts or signage are examples of existing features that can be easily relocated.

9. Where existing sidewalks are narrow, the reviewing body may determine that a canopy or similar shading device be provided, in lieu of street trees.

**Install and maintain streetscape improvements on all streets adjacent to a project.**

10. Install streetscape improvements as specified in Chapter 8–Streetscape Improvements.
11. All sidewalk improvements should be installed and maintained by the adjacent underlying property owners. For example, parkways and tree wells should be planted, irrigated and maintained by the adjacent property owners as described in Chapter 8.
12. New development should be landscaped or paved to match the adjacent public frontage.

**B. SETBACKS**

**Provide setbacks in accordance with the district regulations contained in the Unified Development Code or other regulatory documents.**

1. Adjacent to retail, the setback, if any, should be used primarily for sidewalk widening and may be used for outdoor dining and other commercial activities.
2. Variation in the setback are encouraged to respond to building type and function in order to create visual interest as seen in Figure 2.2.



**Fig 2.2.A** Setback Example

**0 foot Setback**  
Camp Street Loft Building



**Fig 2.2.B** Setback Example

**5 foot Setback**  
Vidorra Condos



**Fig 2.2.C** Setback Example

**12 foot Setback**  
Refugio Place Apartments

## Chapter 3 GROUND FLOOR TREATMENT

### A. GROUND FLOOR TREATMENT: NON RESIDENTIAL STREETS IN DOWNTOWN

Design ground floor space for retail or other active uses, orienting tenant spaces to the street and maximizing storefronts and entries along the sidewalks to sustain street level interest and promote pedestrian traffic.

1. Locate active uses along the street façade to enhance the building's relationship to the public realm. Uses include: lobbies, dining rooms, seating areas, offices, retail stores, community or institutional uses, and residences.
2. Ground floor retail space shall be provided to a depth of at least 25 feet from the front façade and shall include an average 14 foot to 0 inch floor-to-ceiling height, with heights above 14 feet being very desirable.
3. The primary entrance to each street-level tenant that does not have its frontage along a public street shall be provided from a pedestrian paseo, courtyard or plaza, which is connected to the public street or alley.
4. Wall openings, such as storefront windows and doors, shall comprise at least 70 percent of a commercial building's street and river level façade as seen in Figure 3.2.
5. Clear glass for wall openings, i.e., doors and windows, shall be used along all street-level commercial façades for maximum transparency, especially in conjunction with retail and hotel uses as illustrated in Figure 3.3. Dark tinted, reflective or opaque glazing is not permitted for any required wall opening along commercial street level facades
6. A building's primary entrance, defined as the entrance which provides the most direct access to a building's main lobby and is kept unlocked during business hours, shall be located on a public street or on a courtyard, plaza or paseo that is



Fig 3.1 Corner Building on Commerce and South Presa



Fig 3.2 O'Brien Historic Hotel on Navarro and Nueva

connected to and visible from a public street or the River Walk.

7. At least one building entrance/exit, which may be either a building or tenant and resident entrance, shall be provided along each street frontage.
8. Use clear windows and doors to make the pedestrian level façade highly transparent and accessible. Along retail streets, provide a nearly continuous band of windows. Ensure doorways in glass walls exhibit sufficient contrast to be clearly visible.
9. The facades on downtown commercial streets should be detailed as storefronts, except where the proposed ground floor use is live and work units, residential units or other non-commercial building types as seen in Figure 3.1.
10. Where non-residential streets intersect, the ground floor retail space should wrap the corner onto the intersecting streets wherever possible.
11. Residential units with separate entries should include windows or glass doors on the ground floor that look out onto the street.
12. If a residential unit's individual entry along the street is the unit's primary entry, it should be accessible from the sidewalk.
13. More public entrances than the minimum specified by code, including building and or tenant and resident entrances are highly encouraged.

**Incorporate a pedestrian-oriented scale at the street and river level.**

1. Awnings and canopies shall be fabricated of woven fabric, glass, metal or other permanent material compatible with the building's architecture
2. Street wall massing, articulation and detail, street level building entrances and storefront windows and doors, as well as the use of quality materials



Fig 3.3 TownePlace Suites



Fig 3.4 Kress Building Houston Street

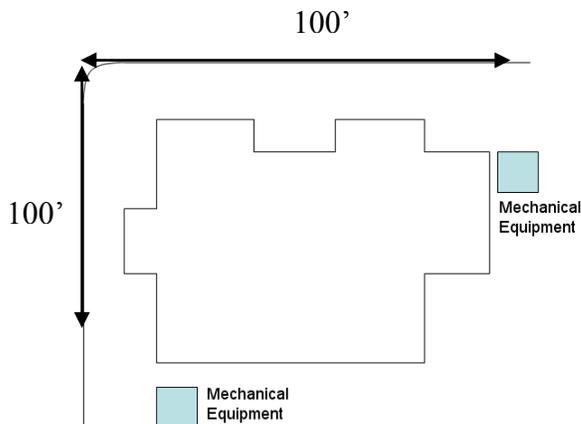


Fig 3.5 Commercial Building Commerce & Alamo Plaza

- and decorative details should be used to promote pedestrian-scaled architecture along the street. (Fig 3.5)
3. Architectural features that reinforce the retail character of the ground floor street and river wall and/or help define the pedestrian environment along the sidewalk, such as canopies, awnings, and overhangs, are encouraged and should be integral to the architecture of the building.
  4. The design of the ground floors of hotels should exhibit a series of public space and entries that equally welcome the general public as well as guests. The first floor should be as transparent as possible. Hotel uses such as bars, lounges, restaurants, cafes, spas and other uses open to the public should exhibit a direct pedestrian connection from the public right of way whenever possible

**Don't waste valuable street frontage on "back of house" uses.**

5. Electrical transformers, mechanical equipment and other equipment should not be located along the ground floor street wall.
6. Electrical transformers, mechanical equipment, other equipment, enclosed stairs, storage spaces, blank walls, and other elements that are not pedestrian-oriented should not be located within 100 feet of the corner property line as seen in Figure 3.6 or visible from public right-of-way.



**Fig 3.6**  
Location of Mechanical Equipment

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## Chapter 4 PARKING AND ACCESS

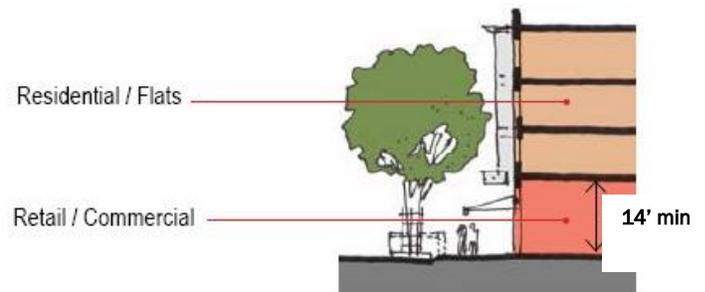
### A. ALL PARKING AND ACCESS

*Locate parking areas, loading and vehicular circulation to minimize its visibility.*

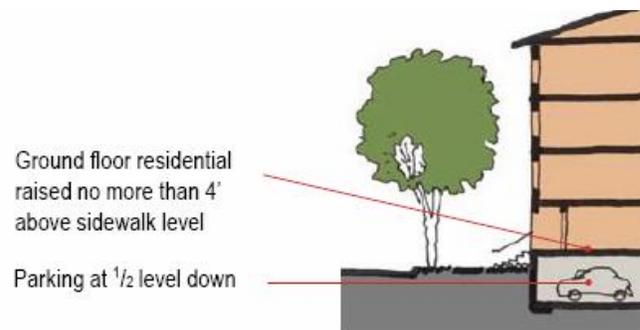
1. **Locate off-street parking behind or below buildings as seen in Figure 4.2 and 4.3.**
2. *Parking areas should be integrated into the project it serves. Public parking may be either a freestanding structure, shared parking or integrated into a project, provided it is clearly signed as public parking.*
3. *Except for the minimum ground-level frontage required to access parking and loading areas, no parking or loading should be visible on the ground floor of any building façade that faces a street as seen in Figure 4.1.*
4. *Drive-through aisles for fast food or similar should be placed to the rear of the building.*
5. *On-street parking lanes may be converted to travel lanes during rush hour.*
6. *Provide on-street parking for visitors and customers.*

*Locate drop-off zones along the curb or within parking facilities to promote sidewalk and street wall continuity and reduce conflicts with pedestrians.*

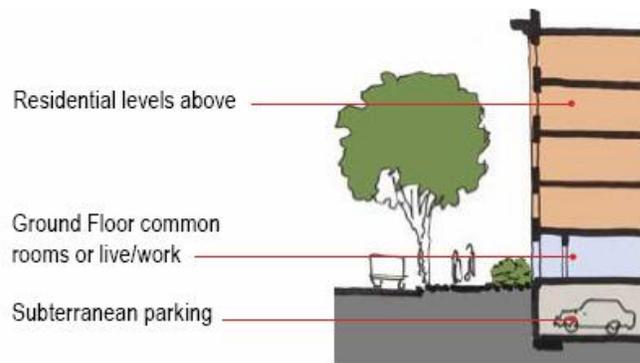
7. *Drop-offs, including residential, hotel and restaurant drop-offs, should be provided either 1) within the off street parking facilities using the parking access or 2) along the required curb line where there is a full-time curbside parking lane with no sidewalk narrowing. Exception: where there is no curbside parking lane and off street drop-off is not feasible, a hotel may have a drop-off lane provided the required sidewalk width of 48 inches is maintained as shown in Figure 4.4.*



**Fig 4.1** Ground floor mixed uses along commercial mixed use street



**Fig 4.2** Residential Street



**Fig 4.3** Residential Street Subterranean Parking

Encourage the use of alternate modes of transportation by providing incentives for reduced automobile use.

8. Provide secure bicycle parking space for residential, commercial and institutional building occupants.

Limit the number and width of curb cuts and vehicular entries to promote street wall continuity and reduce conflicts with pedestrians. See Figure 4.4

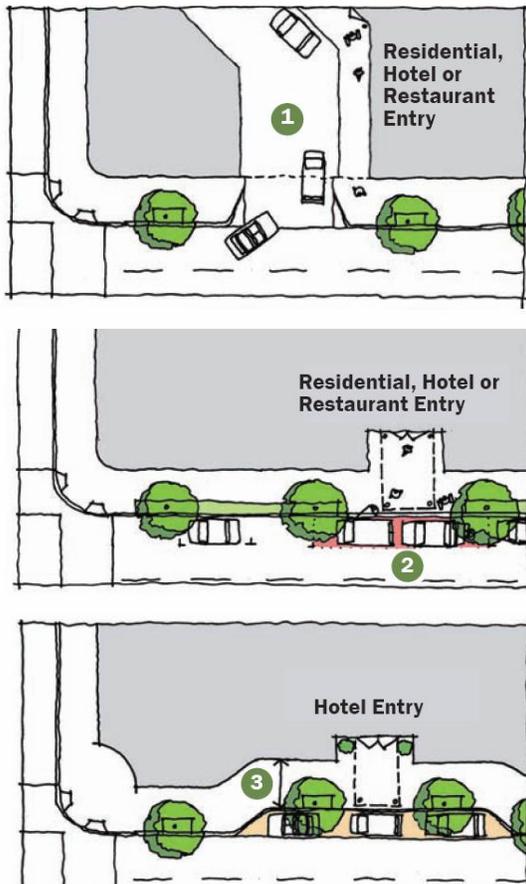
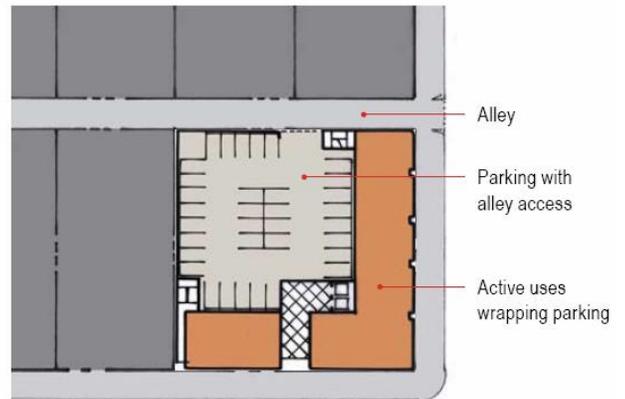


Fig 4.4 Drop-Off Zones

1. Drop-offs occur within building envelope, with minimal obstruction to pedestrian activity
2. Drop-offs along the curb line
3. Drop-offs can be inset where no curbside parking exists and where sidewalk widths can be maintained

Note: No columns may be located in the walkway/path of travel.



9. Vehicular access shall be from an alley, sidewalk or mid-block on a street as illustrated in Figure 4.5.
10. Curb cuts and parking and loading entries into buildings shall be limited to the minimum number required and the minimum width permitted.
11. Where a vehicular exit from a parking structure is located within five (5) feet of the back of the property line, a visual and audible alarm and enhanced paving shall be installed to warn pedestrians and cyclists of exiting vehicles.
12. Parking and loading access should be shared with adjacent properties where feasible.

## B. STAND-ALONE PARKING STRUCTURES

### Architectural Treatment

Parking structures may exhibit the same principles as great building design noted in previous sections. Providing an exterior screen comprised of high quality materials that screen the underlying concrete structure can elevate the building's stature and contribute to the overall quality of Downtown's built environment.

1. Parking structures shall have an external skin designed to improve visual character when exposed to prominent public view. Notwithstanding development standards incremental to Section 35-384: Parking Lots as Primary use, this can include heavy-gage metal screen, pre-cast concrete panels; live green wall (landscaped) laminated glass or photovoltaic panels. Figure 4.6 illustrates an unacceptable external skin.

2. Vertical pedestrian circulation cores (elevator and stairs) should be located on the primary pedestrian corners and be highlighted architecturally so visitors can easily find and access these entry points, in order to eliminate pedestrians using the vehicular ramps.
3. Parking structures should integrate sustainable design features such as photovoltaic panels (especially on the top parking deck), renewable materials with proven longevity, landscaping and storm water treatment wherever possible.



**Fig 4.6** Parking Garage Without External Skin (Discouraged)

4. Treat the ground floor along active pedestrian oriented public streets as specified in Chapter 3: to provide active ground floor uses along the street frontage of the garage; on all other streets the ground floor treatment should provide a low screening element that blocks views of parked vehicle bumpers and headlights from pedestrians using the adjacent sidewalk. Additional treatments such as “live” green walls similar to a Chia Pet provides for a more aesthetic and pleasing façade.
5. Signage and way finding should be integrated with the architecture of the parking structure as seen in Fig 4.7.
6. Integrate the design of public art and lighting with the architecture of the structure to reinforce its unique identity. This is especially important

for public parking structures to aid in visitors finding them upon arrival and getting oriented to downtown Fig 4.8.

7. Interior garage lighting should not produce glaring sources towards adjacent residential units while providing safe and adequate lighting levels per code.



**Fig 4.7** Parking Garage Wayfinding Concept



**Fig 4.8** Parking Garage Identity (Encouraged)

## Landscape Treatment

8. *In most circumstances, the streetscape elements and landscaping should complement the building design. If a parking structure is well-designed, it does not need to be fully screened by dense landscaping in an urban setting.*
9. *Alternatively, an additional row of evergreen columnar trees may be provided in a minimum eight (8) foot wide setback and staggered with the street trees. In combination, the setback and street trees should screen the parking structure from view.*

### C. ALLEYS AND BUILDING WALLS FACING ALLEYS

#### **Maintain and enhance alleys.**

1. **No existing alley shall be vacated for a project if 1) vehicular access to the project is otherwise provided; and 2) vacating the alley will result in the need for additional curb cuts for other parcels on the same block.**
2. *As a general rule, Downtown alleys should not be gated as they provide pedestrians with route alternatives.*

#### **Use alleys primarily for parking structure vehicular access, loading and service.**

3. *The primary purpose of most Downtown alleys is vehicular access and loading.*
4. *Access to parking should be from an alley where one exists or can be provided.*
5. *Where there is no alley and the project includes frontage on a street, parking access should be located mid-block or as far from a street intersection as possible.*
6. *Where lots abut pre-existing alleys, alleys should be used to provide vehicular access to the side or rear of property, including parking, utilities, solid waste disposal, and/or emergency access.*
7. *Alleys should have adequate lighting to ensure a safe pedestrian friendly passage.*

#### **Provide access to utilities and mechanical equipment from alleys.**

8. *Electrical transformers should be located to be accessed from an alley where one exists or can be provided. If located adjacent to a sidewalk, they should be screened and incorporated into the building.*

#### **Design building walls that face alleys to be attractive to those who see them.**

9. *While they can be more simply designed than street-facing façades, interior building walls that face alleys nonetheless should be visually attractive.*
10. *Parking levels may be visible but should be designed to alleviate the horizontality and lack of articulation and to screen lighting from the public rights-of-way and surrounding residential units, as described in the prior discussion of free-standing parking structures.*

#### **Incorporate green elements in alleys.**

11. *Subject to approval by Transportation and Capital Improvements, install permeable paving to infiltrate storm water and eliminate standing water.*

# Chapter 5

## MASSING AND STREET WALL

### A. MASSING

The street is often described by urban designers as “a large outdoor room.” The opportunity to shape this room exists on every street, as its shape is defined by the primary façades of its buildings, which create a street wall.

Reducing large floor plates and varying a building’s height through the creation of smaller structures or façades is a valuable concept when designing large projects that consume half a block or more. Sculpting a building’s mass can also help avoid large bulky structures, which provide more visual monotony than variety. It is the well-balanced variety of building massing and textures of shadow, light and materials that in total adds to the richness of downtown’s built environment.

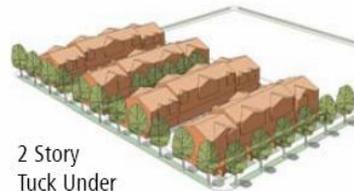
Figures 5.1 through 5.4 illustrate various residential densities ranging from low-rise residential to high-rise residential massing and low-rise commercial massing diagrams. Buildings are generally defined by three types of massing. Low-rise massing is generally less than 6-story structures as seen in Figure 5.1. Figure 5.2 illustrates Mid-rise massing at seven (7) to 20 stories and typically 12 to 20 stories. Fig 5.3 illustrates High-rise massing that is more than 20 stories. Figure 5.4 illustrates how a low-rise commercial building height ranging between 70 feet to 85 feet incorporating a mix of uses. . Parking is usually located in a structured facility behind (attached or detached) the mixed use building, or beneath the building footprint.

**Design building massing to reinforce the street wall with well-scaled elements or structures that are sensitive to the neighborhood context.**

1. *Divide large building facades into a series of appropriately scaled modules so that no building segment is more than 100 feet in length. Provide a passageway at least every 20 feet wide between buildings. Consider dividing a larger building*

*into “modules” that are similar in scale.*

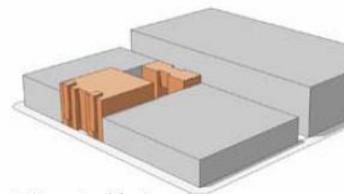
2. *Monolithic slab-like structures that wall off views and overshadow the surrounding neighborhood are discouraged.*
3. *A new building should incorporate design elements that provide a base, middle and a top.*
4. *A new building should, to the extent possible, maintain the alignment of horizontal elements along the block.*
5. *Floor-to-floor heights should appear to be similar to those seen in the area, particularly the window fenestration.*



2 Story  
Tuck Under  
Town Houses  
24-27 DU/AC



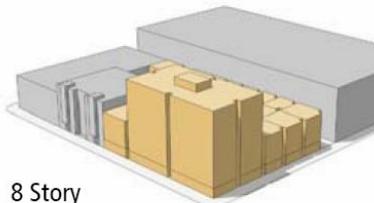
3 Story  
Tuck Under  
Town Houses or 2  
level lofts  
40-45 DU/AC



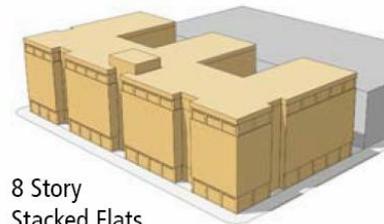
4 Story Resid. Over  
1 Story Mixed-Use  
Stacked Lofts  
60-75 DU/AC



**Fig 5.1** Low Rise Residential Massing Diagrams



8 Story  
Stacked Flats with  
Town Houses  
75 DU/AC

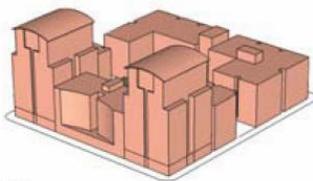


8 Story  
Stacked Flats  
100 DU/AC

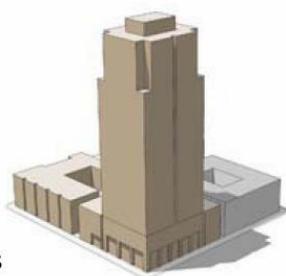


**Fig 5.2** Mid Rise Residential Massing Diagrams

Mid-rise residential building types can be used to achieve higher density levels than low-rise, but require more expensive construction.



12-16 Story  
Stacked Flats  
125 DU/AC

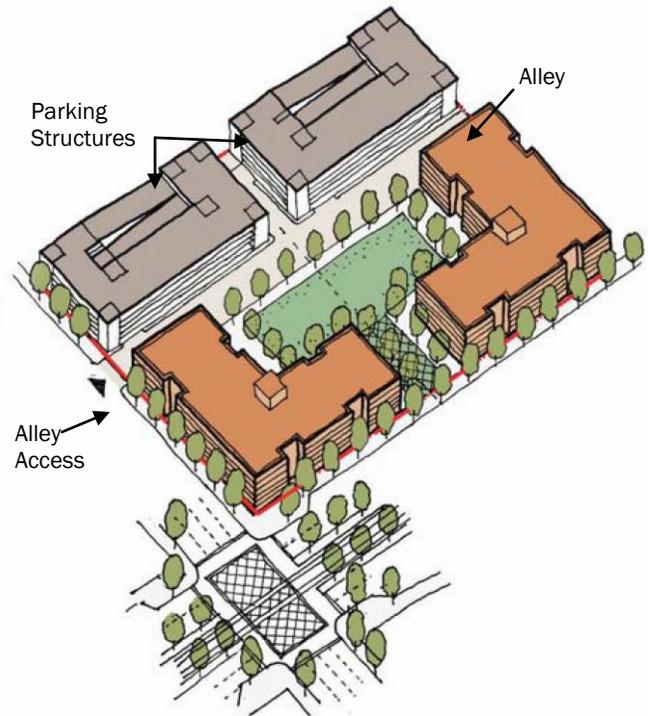


30 Story  
Stacked Flats  
250 DU/AC



**Fig 5.3** High Rise Residential Massing Diagrams

High-rise residential building types can be used to achieve very high density levels, and require Type I construction, which typically results in higher value units.



**Fig 5.4** Low Rise Commercial Massing Diagrams

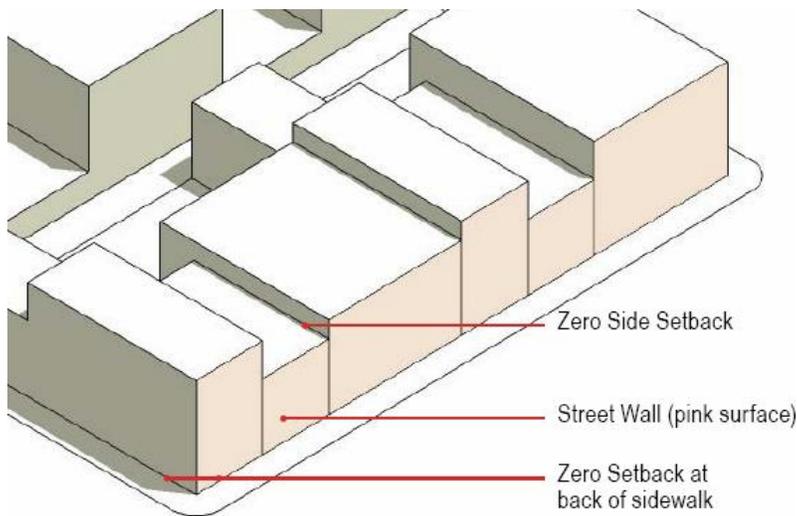
Low-rise commercial buildings should be placed along the property line, with little setback provided. Their massing should form open spaces. High parking ratios require structured parking often almost equivalent in gross square feet to the building space it serves.

## B. STREET WALL

In order to support a pedestrian-oriented public realm, retail or commercial streets would be framed by buildings uniformly placed at the sidewalk with no setback, as seen in Figure 5.5. The height of the street-wall is an important element in shaping the character of the public realm.

**Design building walls along the sidewalk (Street Walls) to define the street and to provide a comfortable scale for pedestrians.**

1. Street walls should be located against the back of sidewalk as seen in Figure 5.5.
2. Walls above the ground floor that step back from the ground floor street wall are considered to be part of the street wall.
3. Breaks in the street wall should be limited to those necessary to accommodate pedestrian pass-throughs, public plazas, entry forecourts, permitted vehicular access driveways, and hotel drop-offs.



**Fig 5.5** Desirable Street Wall and Setbacks

4. An identifiable break should be provided between a building's retail floors (ground level and, in some cases, second and third floors) and upper floors. This break may consist of a change in material, change in fenestration, or similar means as seen in Figure 5.6.

5. Vertical breaks should also be taken into account with fenestration, such as columns or bays.
6. When a property is situated in such a manner as to appear to be the terminus at the end of a street or at a prominent curve in the river, buildings should incorporate an architectural feature that will provide a focal point at the end of the view. These features may include:
  - a. Enhanced building façade
  - b. Enhanced garden or landscape in an open space
  - c. Variation in roof shape
  - d. Change material and color
  - e. Tower element



**Fig 5.6** A three-story building with fenestration that defines ground floor, second floor office and top floor residential uses.

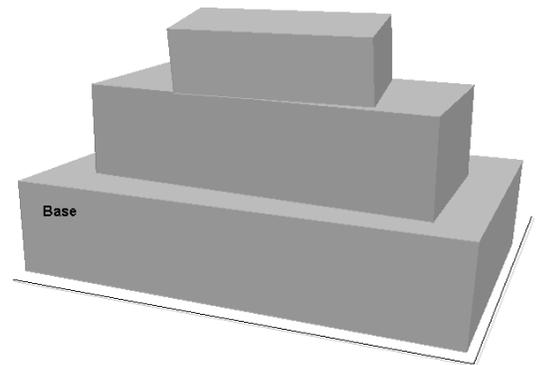
### C. HIGH RISE TOWER SPACING

*Towers ought to be spaced to provide privacy, natural light and air, as well as to contribute to an attractive downtown skyline.*

Establish the building form and massing that responds to function, site characteristics, the context, and the type and mix of uses – regardless of stylistic approaches. A high-rise building has three primary components or areas of interest that are integrated into the whole of the design: a base or podium; middle or tower, and a top. The base is the primary interface with the city context and its street, people, and services. The tower is sized, shaped, oriented and clad to respond to functional and contextual requirements, as well as the lifestyle of the residents. The top integrates mechanical equipment, and contributes to sky views.

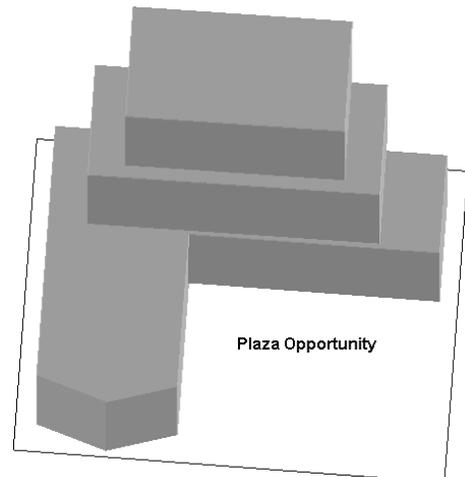
The diagrams below illustrate several common types of tower forms and how the street wall is defined for each. A tower consists of ground floor retail and parking or habitable space above. *Towers should have a minimum four (4) story street wall height.* A lower street wall can occur on a narrow two lane street, while a higher street wall may be appropriate on a four to six lane street.

## ACCEPTABLE



**Tower Set onto a Base** Usually the tower rises above the base and steps back from the street wall 20' or more. This form is generally not preferred.

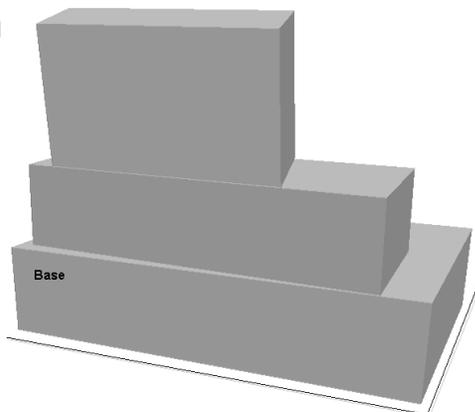
## ENCOURAGED



**Tower Engaged with Base.** Base and tower forms are engaged. The tower massing and detail shall read visually continuous to the sidewalk.

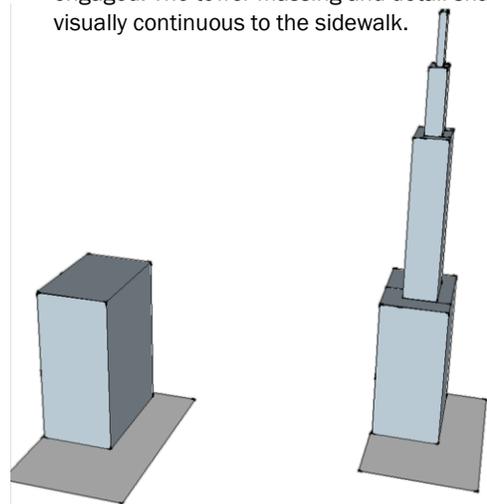
## ENCOURAGED

Tower should read visually continuous to sidewalk



**Tower at Street Corner.** Base with the tower set flush to a street corner. The tower massing and detail reads visually continuous to the sidewalk.

Fig 5.7 Tower Types



**Common Towers.** Towers that are 10 stories or lower do not have to be articulated as seen on the left of the diagram. Towers greater than ten stories must be articulated.

## Tower Massing

Towers in downtown San Antonio greatly affect the appearance of the overall skyline. Evaluations in other cities suggest that towers are most attractive when they have a ratio of height to width of about 3.5:1, for example, 100 feet wide and 350 feet tall. Reducing the bulk of the top of a tower (“sculpting” the tower) can make it more attractive.

### **Towers ought to have slender massing and sound proportions.**

1. Towers should have their massing designed to reduce overall bulk and to appear slender as they ascend higher.
2. Towers may extend directly up from the property line at the street and are not required to be setback.
3. Tower siting and massing should maintain key views toward important natural or man-made features.
4. Design the middle segment or tower of the building to break up the overall bulk into smaller segments and address impacts such as shadowing and views. Reduce the perception of mass through architectural detailing such as changes of materials and color.
5. Design the top of buildings to be a ‘fifth façade’ that may be distinctive against the skyline when looked up to or viewed from above. A well-designed roofline creates opportunities for sky views and views to distinctive landmarks; creates opportunities for sunlight to reach the ground, and orients the public when way finding.
6. Design the top of the building and/or the top of its podium to include opportunity for communal outdoor amenity space and/or a place for environmental innovation such as green roofs, rainwater recovery and solar panels.

## Tower Form

**Tower forms ought to appear simple yet elegant, and add a sculptural form to the Downtown San Antonio’s skyline.**

7. Towers should be designed to achieve a simple faceted geometry and large vertical plane movement. They should not appear overwrought or to have over-manipulated elements.
8. Towers that emulate a more streamline modern style should provide variety through subtle details in the curtain wall, and the articulation of a human-scaled base at the street level.
9. If a project has more than one tower, they should be complementary to each other and employ the same architectural design approach.

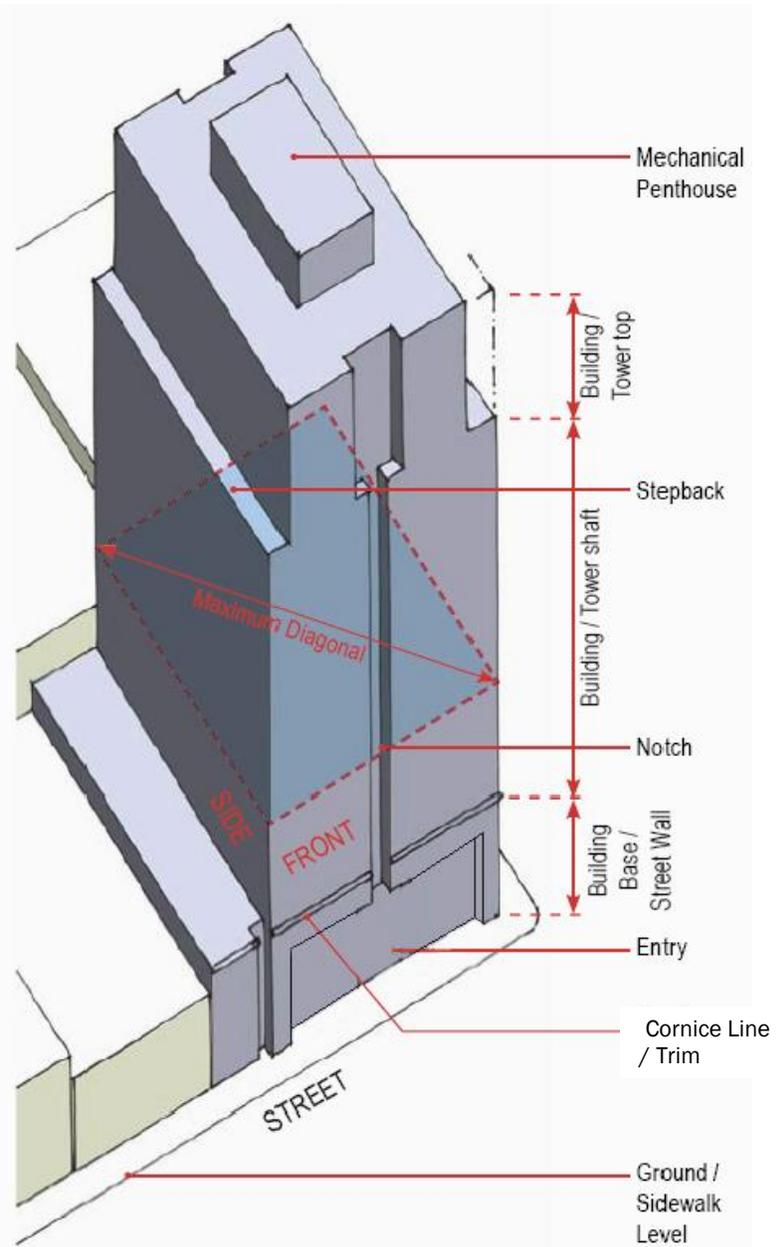


Fig 5.8 Tower Massing & Bulk Control

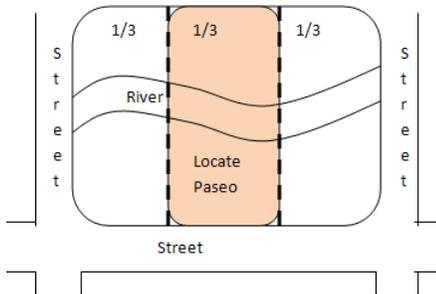
10. *Generally, buildings over 150 feet tall should not be historicized. They should represent contemporary interventions in the skyline.*
11. *A tower's primary building entrances should be designed at a scale appropriate to the overall size and design of the tower and be clearly marked.*
12. *A building's top should be delineated with a change of detail and meet the sky with a thinner form, or tapered point. Unarticulated, flat-topped buildings are not desired in downtown San Antonio's skyline.*
13. *Mechanical penthouses should be integrated into the tower design and should not appear as a separate element, as shown in Fig 5.7*

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## Chapter 6 ON-SITE OPEN SPACE

*Provide publicly accessible open spaces at street level that provide pedestrian linkages throughout Downtown.*

1. Open space should be:
  - Located at the ground level;
  - Open to the public during daylight hours and it should be clear that all are encouraged to take advantage of the space – that they are not a private amenity, but rather a public one;
  - At least 500 square feet in size;
  - Lined with ground floor spaces designed for retail, especially restaurants that include outdoor dining, and/or cultural uses, along at least 20 percent of its frontage.



**Fig 6.1** Mid-Block Paseo Diagram

2. A paseo should:
  - Connect from a public street to another public street, public alley or the San Antonio River
  - Be at least 15 feet wide and should be located in the middle one-third of a block and provide vertical access from the public sidewalk to the River Walk as seen in figure 6.1;
  - Be open to the public during normal business hours;

- Have a clear line of sight to the river or the adjoining street;
- Be at least 50 percent open to the sky or covered with a transparent material;
- Be lined with some ground floor spaces designed for retail, especially restaurants, and/or cultural uses along at least 25 percent of its frontage;
- Include at least one gathering place with a fountain or other focal element.
- Provide a niche for recycling and waste receptacles to be shared with nearby, older buildings lacking such facilities; and
- Add effective lighting to enhance visibility and safety.

*Provide adequate open space for residential projects.*

3. At least 25 percent of the required trees should be canopy trees that shade open spaces, sidewalks and buildings as seen in Figure 6.2.
4. Required trees may be planted off-site if Planning and Community Development and Development Services Departments determine that they cannot be accommodated on-site. Off-site trees may be planted, in the following locations in order of preference: nearby streets on the preferred location for of-site tree planting. Public parks are the next most preferred. The least preferred is payment of monies into a tree mitigation fund.



**Fig 6.2** Paseo in La Villita



Fig 6.3 Pathway in San Antonio Riverwalk

**Establish a clear hierarchy of common open spaces distinguished by design and function to create and connect a pedestrian realm that is conducive to both active and passive uses.**

The common open spaces in downtown are comprised of the following features:

- **Streets:** Streets are among the most public of all open spaces, and communicate the quality of the public environment and the care a city has for its residents.
- **The San Antonio River Walk:** Is also among the most public of all downtown's open spaces. As outdoor pathways devoted exclusively to pedestrians as shown in Figure 6.3, they provide lateral access along the edges of the San Antonio River. Pathways link a considerable number of hotels, restaurants and retail shops.
- **Residential Setbacks:** Residential building setbacks adjacent to buildings provide a transition between the public and private realm, allowing residents to have semi-private spaces with visual access to the public realm.
- **Mid-Block Paseos:** Paseos are extensions of the street grid located on either public or private property. As outdoor passages devoted exclusively

to pedestrians, they establish clear connections among streets, alleys, plazas and courtyards, building entrances, parking and transit facilities that are accessible to the public.

- **Entry Forecourts:** Entry forecourts announce the function and importance of primary building entrances. They should provide a clear, comfortable transition between exterior and interior space.
- **Courtyards:** Courtyards are common open space areas of a scale and enclosure that is conducive to social interaction at a smaller scale.
- **Plazas:** Plazas are common open space areas typically amenable to larger public gatherings. They are readily accessible from the street, as well as active building uses as seen in Main Plaza Figure 6.4.
- **Corner Plazas:** Corner plazas should be appropriate in scale (intimate for residential, larger for commercial) and be programmed with specific uses (to provide outdoor dining for an adjacent restaurant, or small neighborhood gathering place featuring a public amenity). Unprogrammed or over-scaled corner plazas are discouraged.
- **Roof Terraces:** Roof terraces and gardens can augment open space and are especially encouraged in conjunction with hotels or residential uses.



Fig 6.4 San Antonio Main Plaza

***Incorporate amenities that facilitate outdoor activities such as standing, sitting, strolling, conversing, window-shopping and dining, including seating for comfort and landscaping for shade and aesthetics. Open spaces can feature art work, street furniture, and landscaping that invite customers or enhance a building's setting.***

- ***Provide landscaping and seating in each open space type as follows: paseo, courtyards, plazas, roof terraces.***
- ***Ensure anti-skateboard and anti-graffiti design features, pedestrian-scaled signage that identifies uses and shops, site furniture, art work, or amenities such as fountains, seating, and kiosks.***
- *Buffer seating areas from traffic; for example, position a planter between a bench and curb whenever possible.*
- ***Utilize buildings, colonnades and landscaping to define edges and create a sense of three-dimensional containment to urban open spaces and plazas.***
- *Plazas and courtyards are encouraged to incorporate amenities beyond the minimum required, including permanent and/or temporary seating, to facilitate enjoyment and use. Seating should be placed with consideration to noontime sun and shade; deciduous trees should be planted to provide the most comfortable access to sun and shade.*
- *Furniture and fixtures should be selected with regard to maintenance considerations. Ample seating in both shaded and sunny locations should be provided in the plaza areas.*
- *Street furniture should be located in close proximity to areas of high pedestrian activity and clustered in groupings.*
- *Barriers may be considered to separate pedestrian and dining activities through planters, rails and chain with bollards. However they should be moveable.*

***Use landscape elements to provide shade and other functional and aesthetic principles.***

- *On roof terraces, incorporate trees and other plantings in permanent and temporary planters that will provide shade, reduce reflective glare, and add interest to the space. In addition, provide permanent and moveable seating that is placed with consideration to sun and shade, and other factors contributing to human comfort.*
- *Landscape elements should support an easy transition between indoor and outdoor through spaces, well-sited and comfortable steps, shading devices and/or planters that mark building entrances, etc., as seen in Figure 6.5.*
- *Landscape elements should establish scale and reinforce continuity between indoor and outdoor space. Mature canopy trees should be provided within open spaces, especially along streets and required setbacks.*
- *Landscape elements should provide scale, texture and color. A rich, coordinated palette of landscape elements that enhances the development site's identity is encouraged.*
- *Landscaping should be used to screen or divide up blank wall massing. For example, trees and shrubs may be planted in front of a blank wall where there is room or vines may be trained on the wall where space is limited.*



**Fig 6.5** Landscaping along the San Antonio River Walk

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## Chapter 7

### ARCHITECTURAL DETAIL

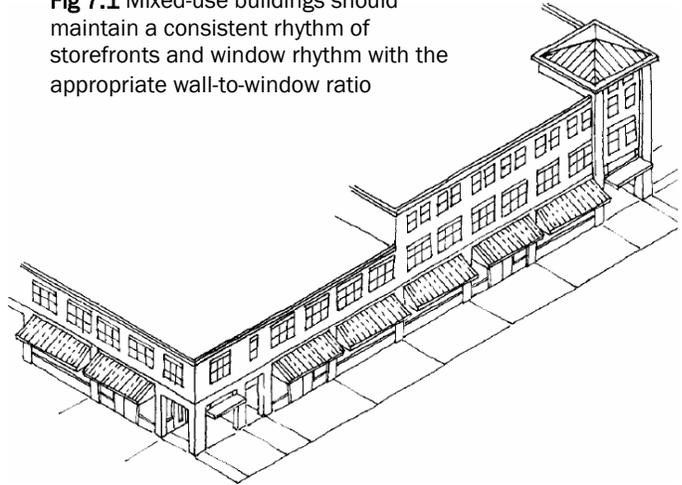
Most commercial buildings in the heart of downtown are variations on the traditional American commercial storefront. These buildings were designed for retail-related functions on the ground level, and therefore relatively large openings were used to maximize visibility and access to goods and services offered inside. Early structures were built to one, two or three stories. Later, this building type was adapted to a taller structure. The front wall is typically masonry construction and built to the sidewalk edge. Upper-story windows are smaller, with vertically oriented openings. The upper floor appears more solid than transparent.

Buildings ought to be well-detailed with long-lived materials that can be appreciated when viewed as a part of a distant skyline, or at an intimate level by the pedestrian. The design of a new infill building in the Downtown, particularly the front façade, can seek inspiration from the historically significant facades on the street but should not attempt to copy them. The contemporary infill structure should be compatible with existing details in terms of height, façade rhythm, placement of doors and windows, color and use of materials, without duplicating an architectural style from the past.

Buildings ought to create a familiar rhythm relative to the overall street. The rhythm and pattern helps to tie the street together visually and provides the pedestrian with a standard measurement of progress. Reinforcement of this façade rhythm is encouraged in new buildings, even if a singular structure. (Figure 7.1)

New development ought to respect the existing fabric of the community by reflecting historic mixed-use development patterns, through the use of building indentations, relationship to the street, first floor plate height, breaks in buildings for open space, and changes in color to avoid monolithic and monochromatic developments.

**Fig 7.1** Mixed-use buildings should maintain a consistent rhythm of storefronts and window rhythm with the appropriate wall-to-window ratio



#### A. HORIZONTAL VARIATION

*Vary the horizontal plane of a building to provide visual interest and enrich the pedestrian experience, while contributing to the quality and definition of the street wall.*

1. Provide well-marked entrances to cue access and use. Enhance all public entrances to a building through the use of compatible architectural or graphic treatment. Main building



**Fig 7.2** Horizontal Fenestrations

entrances shall read differently from retail storefronts, restaurants, and commercial entrances.

2. Avoid continuous massing longer than 150 feet not articulated with shadow relief, projections and recesses. If massing extends beyond this length, it needs to be visibly articulated as several smaller masses using different materials, vertical breaks, such as expressed bay widths, or other architectural elements.
3. Horizontal variation should be of an appropriate scale and reflect changes in the building uses or structure as seen in Figure 7.2.
4. Vary details and materials horizontally to provide scale and three-dimensional qualities to the building.
5. While blank street wall façades are discouraged, there is usually one side of the building that is less prominent (often times called “back of house”).



Fig 7.3 Vertical Variation

## B. VERTICAL VARIATION

Both classical and modern buildings can exhibit basic principles of visual order in the vertical plane – often with a distinct base (street and pedestrian lower levels), a middle (core mid-section, and often consistent for multiple floors of a mid- to high-rise building), and a top (the upper level that distinguishes a building and defines how it “meets the sky”) as seen in Figure 7.3.

Modern or contemporary building designs often layer this principle with more variation and syncopation to create interesting architectural compositions as seen in Figure 7.4. Whenever a new infill building is proposed between two existing structures, every attempt should be made to maintain the characteristic rhythm, proportion, and spacing of existing door and window openings.

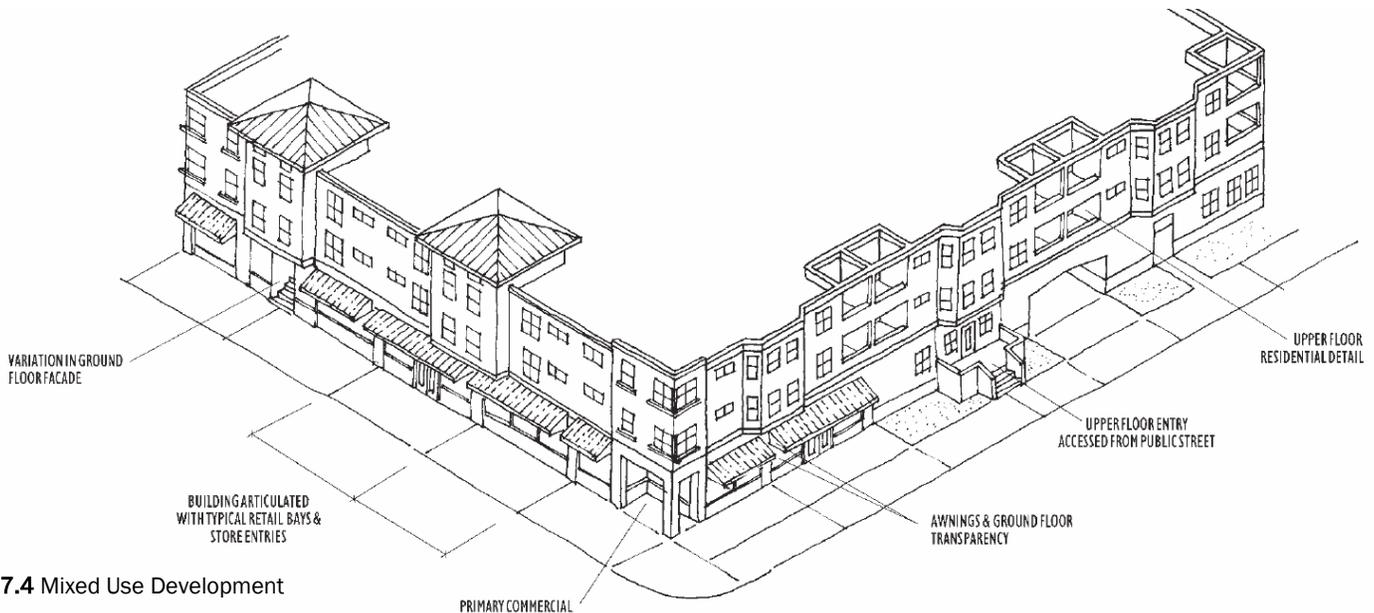
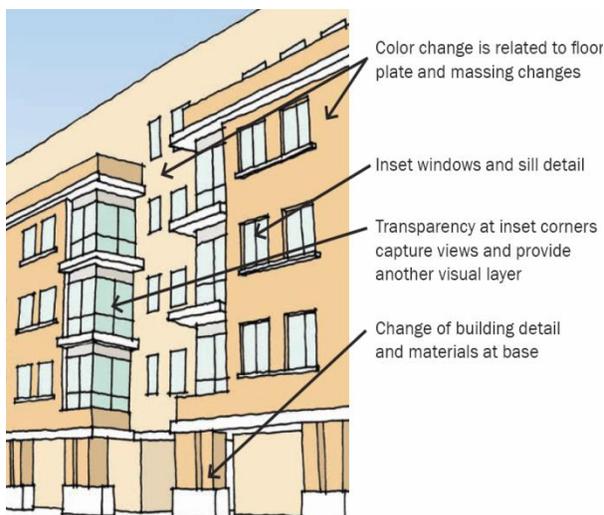


Fig 7.4 Mixed Use Development

**Variation in the vertical plane of a building ought to define the building's uses and visually differentiate ground floor uses from core functions and how the building "meets the sky."**

1. *Employ a different architectural treatment on the ground floor façade than on the upper floors, and feature high quality materials that add scale, texture and variety at the pedestrian level.*
2. *Vertically articulate the street wall façade, establishing different treatment for the building's base, middle and top) and use balconies, fenestration, or other elements to create an interesting pattern of projections and recesses.*
3. *Provide an identifiable break between the building's ground floors and upper floors designed for office or other use. This break may include a change in material, change in fenestration pattern or similar means.*
4. *In order to respect existing historic datums, the cornice or roof line of historic structures should be reflected with a demarcation on new infill structures whenever possible.*
5. *On façades exposed to the sun, employ shade and shadow created by reveals, surface changes, overhangs and sunshades to provide sustainable benefits and visual interest.*



**Fig 7.5** Layering with two adjacent planes that extend from the primary façade forming a modern composite

### C. MATERIALS

After establishing a new infill building's overall massing and vertical and horizontal variation, it is important to develop a building's visual character at the level of material choices and detailing. The interplay of materials, windows and other elements should support the larger design principles as articulated by the architect. Ensure that buildings have architecturally detailed façades, where publicly visible, with no blank or featureless sides in anticipation of abutting to potential development in later phases or on adjacent land.

**Buildings are supposed to aim for a "timeless design" and employ sustainable materials and careful detailing that have proven longevity.**

1. **San Antonio has strong sun conditions. Use deep reveals to get shadow lines.**
2. *Feature long-lived and local materials such as split limestone, brick and stone. The material palette should provide variety, reinforce massing and changes in the horizontal or vertical plane.*



**Fig 7.6** Layering. A building's skin should be layered and bear a direct relationship to the building.

3. *Use especially durable materials on ground floor façades.*
4. *Generally, stucco is not desirable on the ground floor as it is not particularly durable.*
5. *Detail buildings with rigor and clarity to reinforce the architect's design intentions and to help set a standard of quality to guide the built results.*
6. *To provide visual variety and depth, layer the building skin and provide a variety of textures that bear a direct relationship to the building's massing and structural elements. The skin should reinforce the integrity of the design concept and the building's structural elements as seen in Figure 7.5 and 7.6 and not appear as surface pastiche.*
7. *Layering can also be achieved through extension of two adjacent building planes that are extended from the primary façade to provide a modern sculptural composition.*
8. *Cut outs (often used to create sky gardens) should be an appropriate scale and provide a comfortable, usable outdoor space.*
9. *Design curtain walls with detail and texture, while employing the highest quality materials.*
10. *Design the color palette for a building to reinforce building identity and complement changes in the horizontal or vertical plane.*
11. *Value-added materials, such as stone should be placed at the base of the building, especially at the first floor level. Select materials suitable for a pedestrian urban environment. Impervious materials such as stone, metal or glass should be used on the building exterior. Materials will be made graffiti resistant or be easily repainted.*
12. *Corner buildings at prominent intersections require a higher standard of articulation, detailing, and architectural treatment than other buildings within the middle of the block.*

#### Prohibited Exterior Materials

1. Imitation stone (fiberglass or plastic);
2. Plywood or decorative exterior plywood;
3. "Lumpy" stucco, CMU;
4. Rough sawn or "natural" (unfinished) wood, EIFS;
5. Used brick with no fired face (salvaged from interior walls);
6. Imitation wood siding;
7. Plastic panels.

#### D. BUILDING ENTRIES

Design building entries to be clearly visible from the street, and to promote pedestrian comfort, safety, orientation and accessibility. In order to increase personal safety, entries and associated open spaces should be designed to avoid the creation of isolated areas and to maintain lines of sight into and out of a space.



Fig 7.7 Building Entry

1. Reinforce a building's entry with one or more of the following architectural treatments:
  - extra-height lobby space;
  - distinctive doorways;
  - decorative lighting;
  - distinctive entry canopy;
  - projected or deep recessed entry bay;
  - building name and address integrated into the facade;
  - artwork integrated into the facade or sidewalk;

- a change in paving material, texture, or color within the property line;
  - distinctive landscaping, including plants, water features and seating.
2. The primary entrance of all buildings will be off the public sidewalk as seen in Figure 7.7 and not from a parking area.
  3. Strong colors should emphasize architectural details and entrances.
  4. Deep recessed entries into the building are encouraged.

### E. WINDOWS AND DOORS

Provide high-performance, well-detailed windows and doors that add to the depth and scale of a building's façade.



Fig 7.8 Windows and Doors

1. **Windows are to be as transparent as possible at the ground floor of the building, with preference given to grey, low-e glass (88 percent light transmission).**
2. Window placement, size, material and style should help define a building's architectural style and integrity as seen in Figure 7.8.
3. In buildings other than curtain wall buildings, windows should be recessed (set back) from the exterior building wall, except where inappropriate to the building's architectural style. Generally, the required recess may not be accomplished by the use of plant-ons around the window.
4. Windows and doors should be well-detailed where they meet the

exterior wall to provide adequate weather protection and to create a shadow line.

5. Windows on upper floors should be proportioned and placed in relation to grouping of storefront or other windows and elements in the base floor.

### F. GLAZING

Incorporate glazing that contributes to a warm, inviting environment for interior spaces.

1. Ground-floor window and door glazing should be transparent and non-reflective.
2. Above the ground floor, both curtain wall and window and door glazing should have the minimum reflectivity needed to achieve energy efficiency standards. Non-reflective coating or tints are preferred.
3. A limited amount of translucent glazing at the ground floor may be used to provide privacy.

### G. LIGHTING

Provide well-designed architectural and landscape lighting. On each project site, all lighting fixtures should be from the same "family" with respect to design, materials, color, style, and color of light.

1. Light fixtures less than 16 feet in height are considered pedestrian scale as seen in Figure 7.9.
2. All exterior lighting (building and landscape) should be integrated with the building design, create a sense of safety, encourage pedestrian activity after dark, and support Downtown's vital nightlife.
3. Each project should develop a



Fig 7.9 Lighting Pedestrian Path

system or family of lighting layers that contribute to the night-time experience, including facade uplighting, sign and display window illumination, landscape, and streetscape lighting.

4. Architectural lighting should relate to the pedestrian and accentuate major architectural features as seen in Figure 7.10.



Fig 7.10 Architectural Lighting



Fig 7.11 Landscape Lighting

5. Landscape lighting should be of a character and scale that relates to the pedestrian and highlights special landscape features as seen in Figure 7.11.

6. Exterior lighting should be shielded to reduce glare and eliminate light being cast into the night sky.
7. In parking lots, a higher foot candle level should be provided at vehicle driveways, entry throats, pedestrian paths, plaza areas, and other activity areas.
8. Pedestrian-scale light fixtures should be of durable and vandal resistant materials and construction.

#### Security Lighting

9. Parking and security lights shall not provide spillover to neighboring residential properties.
10. Integrate security lighting into the architectural and landscape lighting system. Security lighting should not be distinguishable from the project's overall lighting system.
11. Illuminate alleys at levels for both vehicles and pedestrians.

#### H. SECURITY GRILLS AND ROLL-DOWN DOORS AND WINDOWS

*Balance the need for security doors and windows with the need to create an attractive, inviting streetscape environment.*

1. Exterior roll-down doors and security grills are not permitted in downtown

#### I. MINIMIZING IMPACTS ON NEIGHBORS

In downtown, many projects can be viewed directly from adjacent properties where tenants and residents have clear sight lines to roofs and back-of-house functions. It is important that new projects respect neighboring properties, and that the major mechanical systems, penthouses and lighting should be designed to limit adverse impacts.

*Architecturally incorporate or arrange roof top elements to screen equipment such as mechanical units, telecom antennas, or satellite dishes.*

1. **Ventilation intakes and exhausts shall be located to minimize adverse pedestrian impacts along the sidewalk.** Typically locating vents more than 20 feet vertically and horizontally from a sidewalk and directing the air flow away from the public realm will accomplish this objective.
2. Mechanical equipment should be either screened from public view or the equipment itself should be integrated with the architectural design of the building.
3. Penthouses should be integrated with the building's architecture, and not appear as foreign structures unrelated to the building they serve.

**Minimize glare upon adjacent properties and roadways.**

4. Lighting (exterior building and landscape) should be directed away from adjacent properties and roadways, and shielded as necessary. **No fixture shall be directed at the window of a residential unit either within or adjacent to a project.**
5. Reflective materials or other sources of glare (like polished metal surfaces) should be designed or screened to not impact views nor result in measurable heat gain upon surrounding windows either within or adjacent to a project.

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## Chapter 8 STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS

In downtown, buildings should be sited in ways that create a vibrant streetscape, balanced with a comfortable and safe public realm environment that accommodates pedestrian transit, bicycles and vehicles.

### A. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CITY AND OTHER PUBLIC AGENCIES

1. **Improvement projects undertaken by public agencies, shall comply with the Complete Street Policy** (<http://www.sanantonio.gov/planning/regionalplanning/>)
2. *The shared use of the public right of way is not only for moving vehicles, but equally as 1) the front door to businesses which provide an economic and fiscal foundation of the City and 2) outdoor open space for residents and workers.*
3. All streets on which residential or commercial development is located are “pedestrian-oriented streets” and should be designed and improved accordingly.

### B. SIDEWALK MATERIALS

1. **Sidewalks shall be paved with a slip resistant surface such as medium broom finish concrete.**
2. **Asphalt is not permitted for public sidewalks in downtown.**
3. *Permeable paving sidewalks are encouraged.*

### C. CURB EXTENSIONS AND CROSSWALKS

1. **Crosswalks are to be provided at all types of street intersection configurations, including Xs, Ts and Ls.**
2. *Mid-block crosswalks should be provided on all blocks 550 feet or longer, subject to approval by San Antonio Public Works and/or Texas Department of*



Fig 8.2 Santa Rosa Potential Streetscape

3. *Transportation (TxDOT), if State ROW.  
Curb extensions should be provided at all corners and mid-block crossings, except at the intersection of two arterial streets (Major or Secondary Arterials) and on streets where the curb lane is used as a peak-hour traffic lane, subject to approval by Public Works and TxDOT, if State ROW.*

4. *Crosswalks should be clearly marked with high contrast “zebra” striping, unless some alternative design is provided as part of an integrated urban design for a specific street.*
5. *On streets with significant retail activity, mid-block protected crosswalks should be considered by COSA Public Works and TxDOT.*

**D. PAVING PATTERN**

1. *Decorative paving used in plaza and courtyard areas should complement the paving pattern and color of the pavers used in the public right-of-way.*
2. *Reinforce a building’s entry with a change in paving material as seen in Figure 8.3.*
3. *Paving surfaces must be chosen for easy rollability.*



**Fig 8.3** Special Paving

**E. STREET TREES**

**Tree Species and Spacing**

1. *An owner should agree to maintain street trees so that the pedestrian light fixtures are accessible for maintenance purposes.*
2. *Tree spacing and placement must be coordinated with street light placement as seen in Figure 8.4. Street lights should generally be located midway between adjacent trees, and are commonly spaced every two (2)*

*or three (3) trees, hence 60 to 100 feet on center.*

3. *Street trees should be planted adjacent to a project when they cannot be accommodated on-site.*
4. *In the ideal urban tree canopy, adjacent trees at maturity generally touch one another. Therefore, the typical tree spacing is generally 40 feet, plus or minus 10 feet depending upon the tree species.*
5. *Required street trees should perform as shade trees. However, if approved by the Development Services Department and Department of Planning and Community Development, palms may be planted between or in addition to required shade trees for vertical emphasis.*



**Fig 8.4** Street Trees

6. *On streets where parking spaces are marked – either parallel or angled – trees should be located where they will not impede the opening of car doors or pedestrian access to the sidewalk. Where parking is parallel to the curb, trees are best positioned near the front or back of a space, so that they align with a fender rather than a door. Locating them on the line between two spaces tends to block access to the sidewalk and should be avoided.*

## Planting Standards

7. *Irrigate trees and landscaped parkways with an automatic irrigation system or Low Impact Development (LID) deep well. Deep root irrigation is preferred. Surface mounted spray heads or bubblers may also be used provided they adequately irrigate trees (minimum of 20 gallons per week dispersed over the root zone) and do not directly spray the tree trunks.*
8. **Obtain a permit prior to pruning and adhere to International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Tree Pruning Guidelines and American National Standards Institute (ANSI) A300 standards. These guidelines prohibit “topping” and “heading.”**
9. *Plant a minimum 36 inch box tree wherever possible. Other sizes may be employed to add additional trees.*
10. *Where tree wells are installed, tree wells may be: 1) covered with a three (3) inch thick layer of stabilized decomposed granite, installed per manufacturer’s specifications, and level with the adjacent walkway; or 2) covered by an ADA compliant tree grate.*



**Fig 8.5** Box Trees on Houston Street

## F. STREET LIGHTS

There are two types of street lights in the downtown: major roadway lights (“street lights”) and pedestrian-scale lights (“pedestrian lights”). Street lights provide illumination of both the roadways and sidewalks to the levels required by Public Works and TxDOT for safety and security. Pedestrian lights are ornamental and do not contribute to the required illumination level, but they may supplement it. Pedestrian lights contribute to the pedestrian scale of the street and add a soft glow of white light on the sidewalk.

1. **The street light pole shall be Valmont Tapered 16 Flat Fluting or similar. The pole shall be steel and be between 25 to 32 feet high. Pole base diameter shall be eight (8) inches. The mast arm shall be four (4) to six (6) foot “Windsor” or similar.**
2. *In other locations, pedestrian street light should be attached to each existing roadway light and a matching pedestrian light fixture specified by the City should be installed approximately equidistant between the roadway lights. Pedestrian light spacing must be carefully coordinated with street tree planting in order to meet light spacing requirements and maintain the required tree spacing. An alternative street lighting pattern may be approved by the HDRC.*



**Fig 8.6** Illuminated Pedestrian Path

3. *On streets having established historic street lights, continue the predominant street light pattern. If a project includes roadway widening, refurbish and relocate the historic street lights with supplemental replicas as approved by HDRC.*
4. *All street light or pedestrian light should have a Color Rendering Index of 80 or higher.*
5. *In historic districts the street light should be a 16 flat flute historic pole between 25 and 32 feet high. The pole should be painted "Tavern Green".*
6. *Lighting fixtures should be designed to complement the architecture of the project and improve visual identification of residences and businesses.*
7. *Pedestrian street lights may be set back from the curb on wide sidewalks installed on private property as follows:*
  - *Where sidewalks are wide, the pedestrian lights may be set back between the clear path of travel and the commercial activity zone adjacent to the building.*
  - *Where the building is set back from the sidewalk, the pedestrian street lights may be installed directly adjacent to the front property line.*
  - *All light sources should provide a warm white light. Care should be given to not overly illuminate the sidewalk thereby ruining the pedestrian ambiance.*
  - *All lighting systems should be cut-off, so as not to "spillover" light into adjacent buildings.*

## G. STREET AND SITE FURNITURE

Street furnishings are exterior amenities, such as including but not limited to, tables, chairs, umbrellas, landscape pots, wait stations, valet stations, bicycle racks, planters, benches, bus

shelters, kiosks, waste receptacles and similar items that help to define pedestrian use areas. "Urban tested" street furnishings are particularly important in San Antonio. The choice, use, and implementation of site furniture is very important to convey a desired aesthetic. **Site furniture must be well designed to encourage their use, be able to withstand the elements, and situated in appropriate locations and shaded, clustered in groupings near site features like fountains and in plazas, etc.** Projects using these amenities should give consideration to minimize the cost of replacement.

1. **Site furniture on walkways and sidewalks shall maintain a clear passage for pedestrians and shall be placed to eliminate potential pedestrian and vehicular conflicts.**
2. *Kiosks and directories should be provided adjacent to vehicular and pedestrian entrances and pedestrian nodes. Kiosk siting maximizes visibility and minimizes traffic hazards or obstructing views.*
3. **Design the lower portion of the buildings to support human-scaled streetscapes, open spaces and quality pedestrian environments. This can be achieved with fine-grain architectural design and detailing, quality materials, and through the use of human-scaled elements such as landscaping, site furnishings, awnings, and canopies.**
4. **The following street furnishings are prohibited within the publicly owned portion of the right of way adjacent to streets or the River**



Fig 8.7 Site Furniture

**Walk:**

- a. Vending machines
  - b. Automatic teller machines
  - c. Pay phones
  - d. Photo booths
  - e. Automated machines such as, but not limited to, blood pressure machines, fortune-telling machines, video games, animated characters and other machines that are internally illuminated, or have moving parts, or make noise, or have flashing lights.
  - f. Inanimate figures such as horses, kangaroos, bears, gorillas, mannequins or any such animals, cartoon or human figure. This does not apply to public art approved by the Public Art Board.
5. Bicycle racks (e.g., “loop rack” and “ribbon bar”) should be selected that are durable and consistent with other streetscape furnishings.
  6. Street furnishings should be made of metal, stone, cast stone, hand sculpted concrete, or solid surfacing material, such as Corian or Surell. Recycled plastic will be considered on a case by case basis.
  7. Benches, in particular, should be placed with careful consideration of their relationship to surrounding buildings and businesses. Benches placed perpendicular to the street are often best, as the sitter is neither staring at one storefront nor at passing traffic or sides of parked cars.

**H. ENHANCE OVERHEAD UTILITY DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM**

Overhead power lines and poles create clutter and distraction for San Antonio’s urban fabric. Advantages of underground lines include aesthetics, higher public acceptance, fewer interruptions, and lower maintenance costs.

1. Utility service to each building should be provided underground. If undergrounding utilities is not possible, install metal power poles at a consistent spacing that are located

in bulb-outs to maintain an unobstructed sidewalk.

2. Power poles should have designated location and covers for transformers and conduit to provide vertical power and communication drops.
3. Light poles should be separate from power poles.
4. Street trees should be located on the street side of power poles and sidewalk side of street light poles.
5. Organize power and communication cables so that they only cross at street intersections.
6. Where there is limited sidewalk width, a cantilevered cross beam is preferred to increase the spacing between the wires and the buildings as seen in Figure 8.8.
7. Mounting the power wires to the side of the pole instead of on a cross beam as seen in Figure 8.9 may help avoid conflicts with tree and buildings.



**Fig 8.8** Cantilever Arm on Power Pole



**Fig 8.9** Power Lines Attached to Power Pole

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## Chapter 9

# SAN ANTONIO RIVER WALK

The San Antonio River Walk (also known as Paseo del Río) is a network of walkways along the banks of the San Antonio River, one story beneath the streets of Downtown San Antonio. The River Walk is an important part of the city's urban fabric and a tourist destination lined with taverns, shops and restaurants.

The River Walk winds and loops connecting major tourist attractions from the Alamo to the Rivercenter Mall, Arneson River Theatre to La Villita, HemisFair Park, Tower Life Building, San Antonio Museum of Art, and the Pearl Brewery. The River Walk is an enormously successful pedestrian street that has maintained and integrated new construction by addressing architectural character, mass and scale, height, materials, and façade composition to the existing River Walk fabric. Additional River Improvement Overlay District-3 characteristics can be found in the Unified Development Code (Chapter 35 Section 670.)



**Fig 9.1** River Walk Landscaping

### General Goals along the River Walk

- Encourage high-density, mixed-use developments as extensions of the downtown core.
- Extend the urban character of downtown, as perceived from a river perspective, throughout so that it becomes a high density, mixed-use area.
- Encourage neighborhood and cultural tourism-oriented uses, as well as those that provide additional housing for downtown workers.

- Link the public River Walk with street edges to maintain adequate pedestrian circulation and views of both the street and the river.
- Maximize usable open space to provide opportunities for passive recreation and community gathering.
- Enhance the pedestrian experience with high-quality building features that include balconies facing the river and primary entrances facing the street.
- Design buildings to maintain a human scale.
- Ensure proper solar access on the River Walk.
- Encourage the reuse of existing buildings and design new innovative solutions that enhance the area, and help establish distinct identities.
- When a new building is constructed, it will be designed in a manner that reinforces the basic character-defining features of the area.



**Fig 9.2** Architectural Elements

### A. ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

The objective for architectural design along the River Walk is to encourage new infill construction through innovative designs that enhance the area, and help to establish distinct identities for each of the zone districts.

1. When a property is situated in such a manner as to appear to be the terminus at the end of a street or at a prominent curve in the river, the building shall incorporate into its design an architectural feature that will provide a focal point at the end of the view.
2. Buildings should be sited to help define active spaces for area users, between sites, help animate the streetscape and define street edges.

## B. MASS AND SCALE

All buildings should appear to have a "human scale", by using familiar forms and elements interpreted in human dimensions. Exterior wall designs help pedestrians establish a sense of scale with relation to each building.

Articulating the number of floors in a building can help to establish a building's scale.

1. Treatment of architectural facades shall contain a discernable pattern of mass to void, or windows and doors to solid walls. Openings shall appear in a regular pattern, or be clustered to form a cohesive design. Architectural elements such as columns, lintels, sills, canopies, windows and doors shall align with other architectural features on the adjacent facades.
2. Align at least one (1) horizontal building element with another horizontal building element on the same block face. It will be considered to be within alignment if it is within three (3) feet, measured vertically, of the existing architectural element.
3. Building massing shall be so designed as to provide direct sunlight to vegetation in the river channel.



Fig 9.3 Building Mass and Scale

4. Develop the river floor of the building as primarily transparent. The building facade facing the river shall have at least 50 percent of the river level facade area devoted to display windows and/or windows affording some view into the interior areas. Multi-family residential buildings with no retail or office space are exempt from this guideline.
5. Where a building facade faces the street or river and exceeds the maximum facade length allowed in River Improvement Overlay Districts (RIO) RIO-3, 30 foot length divide the facade of building into modules that express traditional dimensions by changing:
  - a. materials with each building module to reduce its perceived mass.
  - b. the height with each building module of a wall plane.
  - c. the roof form of each building module to help express the different modules of the building mass.
  - d. the arrangement of windows and other facade articulation features, such as, columns, pilasters or strap work, which divides large planes into smaller components.
6. Express the distinction between upper and lower floors.



Fig 9.4 Building Height

### C. HEIGHT

Building heights vary along the River Walk, from one-story houses to high-rise hotels and apartments. Within each zone, a general similarity in building heights should be encouraged in order to help establish a sense of visual continuity. In addition, building heights will be configured such that a comfortable human scale is established along the edges of properties and views to the river and other significant landmarks are provided while allowing the appropriate density for an area.

1. **No height limits in RIO-3.**
2. **Organize the mass of a building to provide solar access to the river:**
  - a. **One method of doing so is to step the building down toward the river when it is located in a position that would cast a shadow there.**
  - b. **Another method is to set the building back from the river a distance sufficient to avoid shading the water.**
3. **Designation of a development node provides for the ability to increase the building height by fifty (50) percent from the RIO requirements.**
4. *Solar access standards for the River Walk can be found in the Unified Development Code (Chapter 35 subsection 673(a)).*



**Fig 9.5** Building Stepping Down Towards the River

### D. MATERIALS AND FINISHES

Masonry materials are well established as the primary features along the River Walk and their use should be continued. Stucco that is detailed to provide a texture and pattern, which conveys a human scale, is also part of the tradition. In general, materials and finishes that provide a sense of human scale reduce the perceived mass of a building and appear to blend with the natural setting of the river should be used.

1. **Utilize local materials and traditional building materials for primary wall surfaces. A minimum of seventy-five (75) percent of walls (excluding window fenestrations) must be composed of the following:**
  - a. **Modular masonry materials including brick, stone, and rusticated masonry block, tile, terra-cotta, structural clay tile and cast stone. Concrete masonry units (CMU) are not allowed as a finished material.**
  - b. **Other new materials that convey the texture, scale, and finish similar to traditional building materials.**
  - c. **Stucco and painted concrete when detailed to express visual interest and convey a sense of scale.**
  - d. **Painted or stained wood in a lap or shingle pattern.**
2. **The following materials are not permitted as primary building materials and may be used as a secondary material only:**
  - a. **Large expanses of high gloss or shiny metal panels.**
  - b. **Mirror glass panels. Glass curtain wall buildings are allowed in RIO-3 as long as**



**Fig 9.6** Building Materials and Finishes

the river and street levels comply with statement 1 above.

- c. Chain link fences are not allowed on properties abutting the river
3. *The use of decorative surfaces for paving and other landscape structures is a defining element along the River Walk. Paving materials and patterns should be carefully chosen to preserve and enhance the pedestrian experience.*
4. **Paint or Finish Colors:**
  - a. Use historic colors of indigenous building materials for properties that abut the Riverwalk area.
  - b. Use matte finishes instead of high glossy finishes on wall surfaces. Wood trim and metal trim may be painted with gloss enamel.
  - c. Bright colors may highlight entrances or architectural features.



Fig 9.7 Building Façade Composition

## E. FACADE COMPOSITION

Traditionally, many commercial and multi family buildings in the core of downtown San Antonio have had facade designs that are organized into three (3) distinct segments: First, a "base" exists, which establishes a scale at the river level; second a "mid-section", or shaft is used, which may include several floors. Finally a "cap" finishes the composition. The cap may take the form of an ornamental roof form or decorative molding and may also include the top floors of the building. This organization helps to give a sense of scale to a building and its use is encouraged.

## Street Façade

1. Street Building façades that are taller than the street wall (60 feet) shall be articulated at the top of the street wall or stepped back in order to maintain the rhythm of the street wall.
2. Roof forms shall be used to conceal all mechanical equipment and to add architectural interest to the structure.
3. High rise buildings, more than 100 feet tall, shall terminate with a distinctive top or cap. This can be accomplished by:
  - a. reducing the bulk of the top 20percent of the building by 10percent
  - b. by stepping back the top 20percent of the building
  - c. changing the material of the cap
4. *Buildings should be composed to include a base, middle and a cap.*
5. *Roof surfaces should include strategies to reduce heat island effects such as use of green roofs, photo voltaic panels, and/or the use of roof materials with high solar reflectivity.*

## Fenestration

6. Windows shall be recessed at least 2 inches within solid walls (not part of a curtain wall system).
7. Windows shall be used in hierarchy to articulate features on the façade and grouped to establish rhythms.
8. Curtain wall systems shall be designed with modulating features such as projecting horizontal and/or vertical mullions.



Fig 9.8 Entrance from the River Walk

9. *Windows should relate in design and scale to the spaces behind them.*

### Storefront Entrances

10. **Entrances shall be equally prominent on the street side as on the river side.**
11. **Entrances shall be placed so as to be highly visible.**
12. **Entrances shall have a change in material and/or wall plane.**
13. **Secondary entrances shall have architectural features that are subordinate to the primary entrance in scale and detail.**
14. *Entrances should not use excessive storefront systems.*
15. *Any project along the river should employ a public lateral access at street level in addition to the River Walk level as seen in Figure 9.9.*



Fig 9.9 Rivercenter Mall

### Riverside Façade

16. **Stone detailing shall be rough hewn, and chiseled faced.** *Smooth faced stone is not desirable as the primary building material, but can be used as accent pieces.*
17. **Facades on the riverside shall be asymmetrical, pedestrian scale, and not give the appearance of the “back of a building” but designed with simpler details, and appear less formal than the street facades.**
18. *If awnings, arcades and canopies are to be used they should accentuate the character-defining features of a building.*



Fig 9.10 Building Façade along the River Walk

19. **The awning, arcade or canopy shall be located in relationship to the openings of a building. That is, if there are a series of awnings or canopies, they shall be located at the window or door openings.**
20. **The maximum wall plane length within RIO-3 shall be 30 feet and buildings shall employ at least two of the following techniques:**
  - a. **Change materials with each building module to reduce the perceived mass, or;**
  - b. **Change the height of a wall plane or building module. The change in height shall be at least 10 percent of the vertical height, or;**
  - c. **Change roof form to help express the different modules of the building mass, or;**
  - d. **Change the arrangement of windows and other façade articulation features, such as columns or strap work, which divides large wall planes into smaller components.**



Fig 9.11 Automobile Access and Parking Buildings

### Automobile Access and Parking

21. Locate parking areas that are off-street, ground level surface used to park cars or any parking structure, toward the interior of the site or to the side or rear of a building.
22. Parking lots should be avoided as a primary land use. Parking lots as a primary use are prohibited in RIO 3 and for all properties that fall within 100 feet of the river right of way in all RIO districts.
23. Curb cuts may be no wider than twenty five (25). Continuous curb cuts are prohibited.
24. Parking garages should have retail space on the ground or river floor provided the retail space has at least fifty (50) percent of its linear street frontage as display windows. Parking structures may be made visually appealing with a mural or public art component approved by the HDRC on the parking structure.



Fig 9.12 River Walk Landscaping

## F. SITE AND LANDSCAPE

1. Minimize the potential for erosion at the Riverbank. Grade slopes at a stable angle not to exceed 4:1 and provide plant material that will stabilize the soil such as vigorous ground covers, vines or turf planting that are native and noninvasive species as found on the permissible plant list maintained by the Parks and Recreation Department
2. Where above ground storm water management facilities are required, such facilities shall be multi-purpose amenities. For example, water quality may be included as part of a hardscape patio.
3. Site lighting shall be shielded by permanent attachments to light fixtures so that the light sources are not visible from a public way and any offsite glare is prevented.
4. Outdoor spaces adjoining and visible from the river right-of-way shall have average ambient light levels of between one (1) and three (3) foot-candles with a minimum of 0.5-foot-candles and a maximum of six (6) foot-candles at any point measured on the ground plane. Interior spaces visible from the river right-of-way on the river level and ground floor level shall use light sources with no more than the equivalent lumens of a one hundred-watt incandescent bulb. Exterior balconies, porches and canopies adjoining and visible from the river right-of-way shall use light sources with the equivalent lumens of a sixty-watt incandescent bulb with average ambient light levels no greater than the lumen output of a one hundred-watt incandescent light bulb as long as average foot candle standards are not exceeded. Accent lighting of landscape or building features including specimen plants, gates, entries, water features, art work, stairs, and ramps may exceed these standards by a multiple of 2.5. Recreational fields and activity areas that require higher light levels must be screened from the river hike and bike pathways with a landscape buffer.

5. *When the topography of the site exceeds a four to one (4:1) slope and it becomes necessary to use a masonry wall as part of the detention/retention area, use a textured surface and incorporate plant materials from the plant list maintained by the Parks Department.*
6. *Paving materials and patterns should be carefully chosen to preserve and enhance the pedestrian experience. Pervious paving is encouraged where feasible and appropriate to the site.*
7. *Site lighting should be considered an integral element of the landscape design of a property. It should help define activity areas and provide interest at night. At the same time, lighting should facilitate safe and convenient circulation for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists. Overspill of light and light pollution should be avoided.*
8. *The position of a lamp in a pedestrian-way light should not exceed fifteen (15) feet in height above the ground.*
9. *Minimize the visual impacts of lighting in parking areas in order to enhance the perception of the nighttime sky and to prevent glare onto adjacent properties.*
10. *Service areas and mechanical equipment should be visually unobtrusive and should be integrated with the design of the site and building. Noise generated from mechanical equipment should not exceed city noise regulations.*

**G. SIGNAGE**

1. **All signs within the downtown “D” district shall conform to all City codes and must have recommendation of the DPCD and HDRC prior to approval.**
2. **Permits must be obtained following approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness.**
3. **No sign shall be painted, constructed, erected, remodeled, refaced, relocated, expanded or otherwise altered until it has been approved and a permit has been obtained from the**

**Development Services Department in accordance with the provisions of this section and applicable city code provisions.**

4. **All graphic elements shall reinforce the architectural integrity of any building.**
5. **Freestanding signs are allowed, provided the sign does not interfere with pedestrian or vehicular traffic. Freestanding signs shall be perpendicular to the street, two sided and no taller than six (6) feet. Freestanding signs shall not be located in the right of way.**
6. **For all signage, signage width and height must be in proportion to the facade, respecting the size, scale and mass of the facade, building height, and rhythms and sizes of window and door openings. The building façade shall be considered as part of an overall sign program but the sign shall be subordinate to the overall building composition.**



**Fig 9.13** Building Sign

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## Chapter 10 SIGNAGE

The provisions in this section supplement City Code, Chapter 28: Signs.

**Projects involving new building construction must submit a conceptual signage plan with the building elevation plans for design review and approval before individual signs will be reviewed. The sign plan shall address:**

- **Proposed location of signage;**
- **General dimensions of signage area; and**
- **Design & materials guidelines, including colors, letter size, illumination method, etc.**

### A. MASTER SIGN PLAN

Signage can contribute to creating strong building identity when it is well-integrated with the design of the architect. A project's signage plan must begin during design development to better achieve integration with the architect.

The plan ought to be designed and prepared by a graphic design firm or signage design company to assure a cohesive, integrated approach to the variety of signs required for building identification, way finding and regulatory needs.

**To qualify for a Development Agreement (Sign Master Plan) an area must:**

1. **Include two (2) or more contiguous lots, which may be separated by a street or drainage rights-of-way, which are not included in any other Sign Master Plan.**
2. **The owners of all lots within the Sign Master Plan Agreement must agree in writing that neither they nor their successors in ownership shall exceed the maximum height, square footage and number on any of the lots within the plan.**
3. **All existing signs within the Sign Master Plan Agreement must be in conformance with this article.**

### B. SIGNAGE GUIDELINES BY TYPE

The following design guidelines do not supersede current sign height and area regulations, but are intended to provide design guidance to achieve visually effective and

attractive signage throughout Downtown. These design recommendations and visual examples are meant to help applicants understand what is generally considered appropriate signage design for a downtown development project.

### High Rise Office Uses

A corporate campus refers to a commercial property that may include multiple buildings with commercial or institutional tenants, often with ground floor commercial and retail spaces, open space, parking garages and loading docks.



**Fig 10.1** Monument Sign

1. *Freestanding signs are discouraged, except at a single major site entry.*
2. *All signs should be designed to complement the architectural style and setting of the structure.*
3. *Primary signs near the top of the building should contain only the name of the major building tenant.*
4. *Exposed conduit and tubing is prohibited. All transformers and other equipment should be concealed.*
5. *Tenant directory signs are allowed if wall mounted.*

## Residential Project Signs

6. Residential signage should reinforce the identity of a complex and be visible from the most prominent public corner or frontage.



Fig 10.2 Judson's Loft Sign

7. All signs should be integrated with the design of the project's architecture and landscaping. As a family of elements, signs should be related in their design approach and convey a clear hierarchy of information.

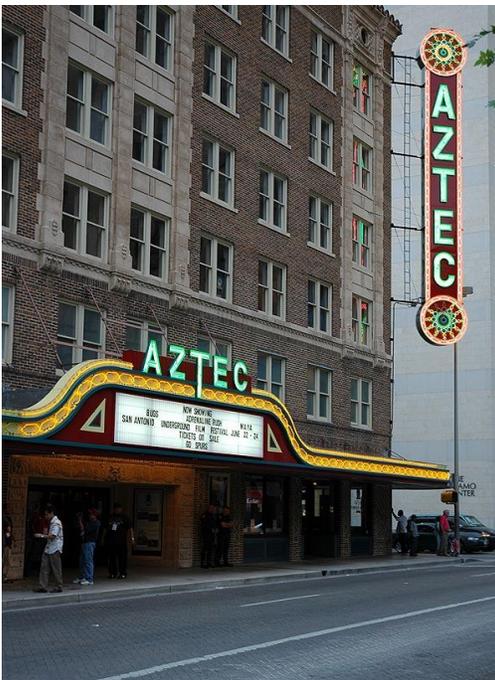


Fig 10.3 Aztec Building Sign



Fig 10.4 Commercial Sign

8. Signage should identify the main and visitor entrance or lobby, resident or visitor parking, community facilities, major amenities and commercial uses. These signs should be related in style and material while appropriately scaled for the intended audience.
9. The size of signs and sign letters should be proportional to the space they are located in, with the letters typically between six (6) and 16 inches high.
10. Signs for community facilities should be prominent and easily read by first time visitors.
11. Mixed-use projects with first floor commercial or retail tenants should comply with the signage guidelines for Storefront Commercial section below.

## Storefront Commercial

12. Electrical transformer boxes and raceways are required to be concealed from public view.
13. Windows signs should not exceed 15% of the window area. Signs should not obstruct visibility.
14. For projects that have multiple storefront tenants of similar size, all signage should be of the same type (i.e., cut out letters, blade or the like) and relative size and source of illumination.
15. Signs should respect architectural features such as

vertical piers and trim work. Signage should be placed in accordance with façade rhythm, scale and proportion, including windows, storefronts and entries.

16. When a large building contains several storefronts, signs for the individual business should relate to each other in terms of location, height, proportion, color and illumination while allowing the observer to readily distinguish between individual stores.
17. External projected lighting fixtures are the preferred method of lighting signs. External lighting emphasizes the continuity of the building's surface and signs should appear to be more of an integral part of the building's façade.
18. Signs should generally not exceed 14 to 20 feet above the ground or be higher than the building cornice line or street wall height.
19. Tenant directory signs are allowed as wall mounted or freestanding signs for businesses located in alleys, courtyards, arcades or paseos.



Fig 10.5 Pearl Brewery Sign

### C. SIGNAGE GUIDELINES FOR ALL SIGN TYPES

#### Signs in Context

1. **All fascia signage shall be integrated into the architecture.** Signs may be mounted to architectural canopies or painted or mounted directly onto building

surfaces without a back plate.

**The signage material will be weather proof and fade resistant.**

2. Signs should be conceived as an integral part of the project design so as not to appear as an afterthought.
3. The location, size, and appearance of signs should complement the building and character of the Downtown districts in which they are located.
4. Signs should respect residential uses within and adjacent to a project. The intent is to promote a more peaceful living environment without undue impacts upon residential uses. Small signs, no animation, limited lighting and shorter operating hours are appropriate where signs are visible from residences.
5. Wall mounted signs on fascias above storefront window should be sized to fit within existing friezes, lintels, spandrels, and other such features and not extend above, below, or beyond them.
6. Graphics and signage may be illuminated by indirect, internal, or bare-bulb sources, providing that glare is not produced; by indirect light sources concealed by a hood or diffuser; by internal illumination with standard opal glass or other translucent material or with an equal or smaller light transmission factor.

#### Sign Location in Relation to Street Trees

7. **No signs shall be located between 20 feet above sidewalk elevation and 40 feet above sidewalk elevation to avoid conflicts with the tree canopy, except where the applicant demonstrates that no conflict will occur.**
8. **Trees may not be topped or headed back on the sides to expose signs.**

## Sign Illumination and Animation

9. Signs shall use appropriate means of illumination. These include: neon tubes, fiber optics, incandescent lamps, cathode ray tubes, shielded spotlights and wall wash fixtures.

## Discouraged Signs

10. *The following signs are strongly discouraged in downtown:*
  - *Internally illuminated awnings*
  - *Conventional plastic faced box or cabinet signs (can signs)*
  - *Formed plastic faced box or injection molded plastic signs*
  - *Luminous vacuum formed letters*
  - *Animated or flashing signs*

## Chapter 11 SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

To promote a more livable Downtown, projects must address sustainability at multiple levels. The design of the street, buildings, and landscape must work in tandem to achieve the most effective results. This chapter provides an overview of the intent of the Downtown Design Guide with respect to sustainability.

### A. NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN

1. Support walkability through sensitive design of the site, building and streetscape.
2. Since all of Downtown San Antonio is within walking distance of transit stops, design all projects as Transit-Oriented Developments (TODs) that encourage residents, tenants and visitors to use transit.
3. Orient projects to provide convenient access to the nearest transit options (bus, streetcar, trolley, bicycle), wherever possible.
4. New infill construction buildings should be certified as Green Buildings by LEED or other ratings systems.

### B. STREET AND ALLEY DESIGN

1. Design sidewalks, including street trees, parkways, tree wells and paving, to collect storm water runoff, thereby contributing to sustainable Green Streets and enhancing the value of the project.
2. Design alleys, placitas and paseos to collect storm water where feasible.

### C. SITE AND LANDSCAPE DESIGN

1. Incorporate on-site landscape elements that reduce energy use and enhance livability.
2. Consider providing a green roof to reduce solar gain (which

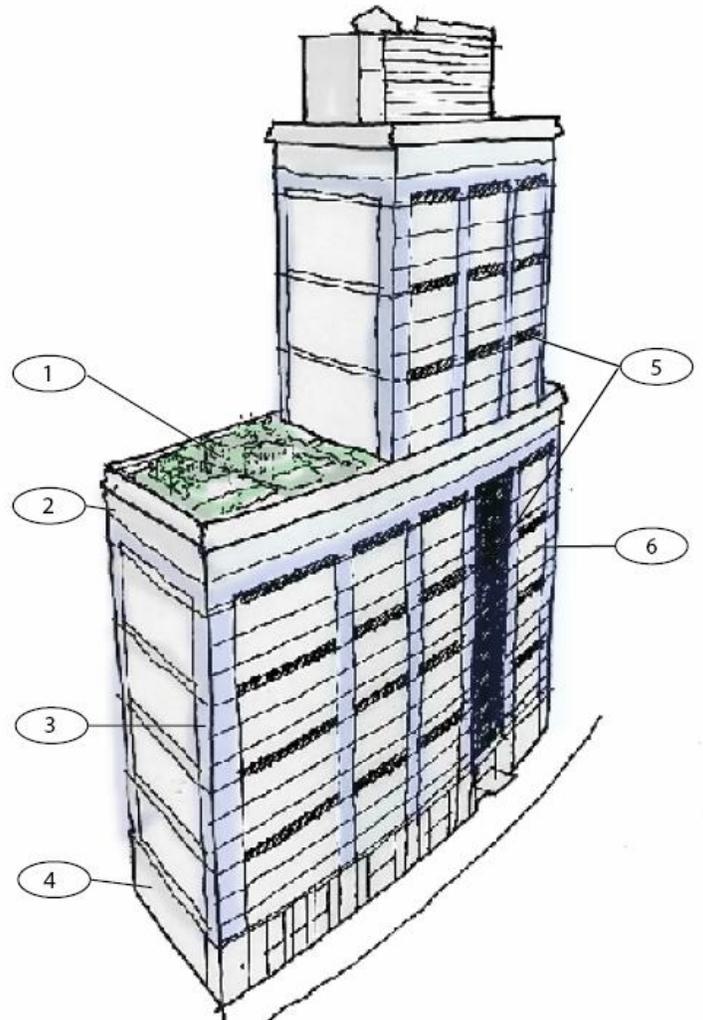


Fig 11.1 Green Building Illustration

1. Rooftop garden provides natural insulation for the building. Rain water storage and reserve for roof garden irrigation.
2. High quality filtered air: Building materials and paints with low emitting gasses.
3. Transparent corners.
4. 2-level retail and lobby space at grade.
5. Photovoltaic panels as 'design element', integrated into the horizontal and vertical linework and design. Panels convert sunlight to electricity
6. Low-E coating windows



**Fig 11.2** Camp Street Lofts Green Roof

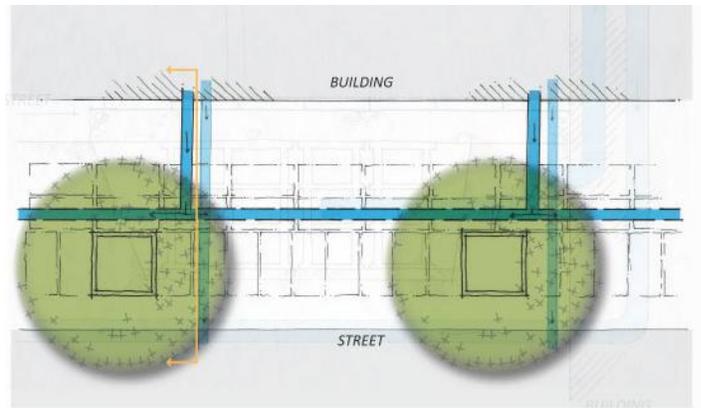
*substantially improves their design sustainability and helps alleviate some of our most pressing ecological challenges – including air and water quality, rising temperatures, and flooding and erosion from rainfall events.*

*contributes to the urban heat island effect) and to reduce the quantity of water entering the storm drains system as seen in Figure 11.2.*

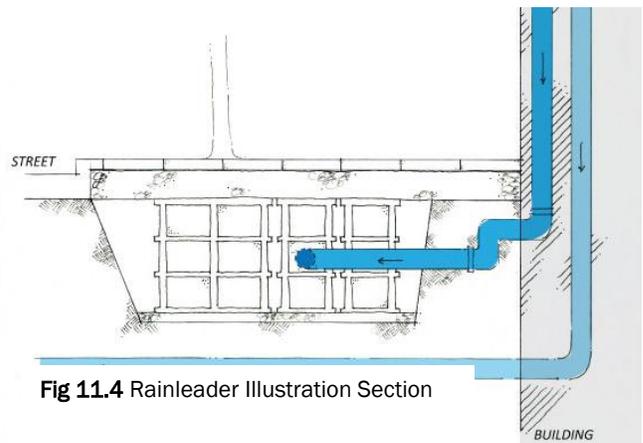
3. All new development should support a coordinated and comprehensive storm water management system strategy through the utilization of Low Impact Development (LID).

#### D. BUILDING DESIGN

1. All projects must comply with the City's green building ordinance, Build San Antonio Green (BSAG).
2. Projects that preserve or rehabilitate historic structures must be reviewed with the City of San Antonio Historic Design Guidelines.
3. Wherever possible, existing structures should be re-used and integrated into new projects to retain the authentic architectural fabric of Downtown.
4. Integrate LID to include: roof water collection and reuse, cisterns, green roofs, living machines, inlet devices, deep mulching, structural soils, sand and organic and peat filters, bioretention and bioretention, meadow and pocket and gravel and shallow marsh wetlands, subsurface detention, filter-vertical recovery structures, rain gardens, biofiltration, depressed parking lot islands, permeable concrete, open joint terrace and walk system, and green canopies.
5. Figure 11.3 and 11.4 illustrate how to integrate green utilities like soil, trees and water into our urban areas



**Fig 11.3** Rainleader Illustration Plan



**Fig 11.4** Rainleader Illustration Section



Fig 11.5 Storm water Control Landscaping Solution

#### D. MEASURES IN ULTRA URBAN AREAS

LID projects are engineered systems that manage storm water as close to the ground as possible, replicates the pre-development hydrology of the site and maintains pre-development flow conditions in a watershed. There are many LID techniques that can be selected for use, and studies have shown that utilizing these techniques actually can result in savings over the life of a project.

##### Green Walls and Roofs Rain Gardens

1. A green roof cover is a veneer of vegetation that is grown on and covers an otherwise conventional flat or pitched roof (30° slope), endowing the roof with hydrologic characteristics that more closely match surface vegetation than a typical roof. The overall thickness of the veneer may range from two (2) to six (6) inches and may contain multiple layers, consisting of waterproofing, synthetic insulation, non-soil engineered growth media, fabrics, and synthetic components. Green roof covers can be optimized to achieve water quantity and water quality benefits. Through the appropriate selection of materials, even thin vegetated covers can provide significant rainfall retention and detention functions. Vegetated roof covers that are 10 inches, or deeper, are referred to as 'intensive' vegetated roof covers. Intensive assemblies can also provide substantial environmental benefits,



Fig 11.6 Roof Layers for a Green Roof Garden

but are intended primarily to achieve aesthetic and architectural principles.

##### Rain Capture and Reuse

2. Storm water can be routed into cisterns above or below ground to detain the water onsite. The storm water can then be used to irrigate landscaping or routed into other treatment features for water quality polishing before released offsite. Below grounds cisterns can be covered with parking lots, reducing the footprint of the site.

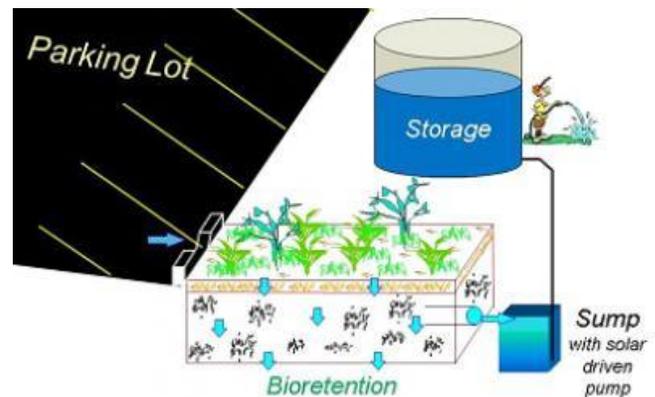
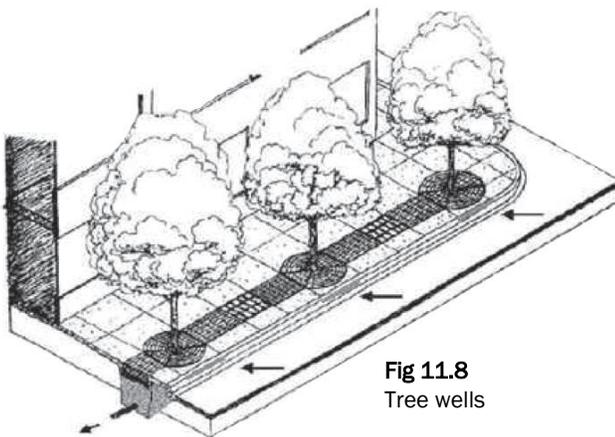


Fig 11.7 Rain water Capture from a Surface Parking Lot

##### Bioretention

3. Tree box filters are very small bioretention areas installed beneath trees that can be very effective at controlling runoff, especially when distributed throughout the site. Runoff

is directed to the tree box, where it is cleaned by vegetation and soil before entering a catch basin. The runoff collected in the tree-boxes effectively irrigates the trees. The system consists of a container filled with a soil mixture, a mulch layer, under-drain system and a tree or shrub. Storm water runoff drains directly from impervious surfaces through a filter media. Treated water flows out of the system through an underdrain connected to a storm drainpipe and inlet or into the surrounding soil. Tree box filters can also be used to control runoff volumes and flows by adding storage volume beneath the filter box with an outlet control device. Typical



landscape plants (shrubs, ornamental grasses, trees and flowers) are used as an integral part of the bioretention and filtration system. They can fit into any landscape scheme, increasing the quality of life in urban areas by adding beauty, habitat value, and reducing urban heat island effects.



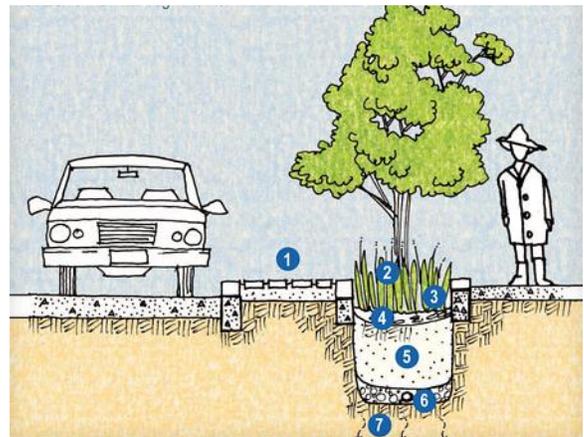
**Fig 11.9**  
Pervious versus Impervious Surface Parking Lot

### Permeable Pavement

4. Porous pavement is a permeable pavement surface with a stone reservoir underneath. The reservoir temporarily stores surface runoff before infiltrating it into the subsoil. Runoff is thereby infiltrated directly into the soil and receives some water quality treatment. Porous pavement often appears the same as traditional asphalt or concrete but is manufactured without “fine” materials, and instead incorporates void spaces that allow for infiltration.

### Planters

5. Planters can be designed in a variety of formats to serve as both as a storm water control as well as an amenity with trees and public interest.



**Fig 11.10**  
Curbside Flow-Through Planter

- 1 Pavers
- 2 Vegetation
- 3 New Tree
- 4 Mulch Layer
- 5 Newly Prepared Soil
- 6 Root Drainage
- 7 Undisturbed Native Soil

## Chapter 12 PUBLIC ART

Historically, cities embrace the arts of their time. The character, personality and spirit of the city is often conveyed most vividly through its arts and culture. Downtown stakeholders benefit from a commitment to public art, for maintaining a strong arts and cultural presence is a significant factor in cultivating livable neighborhoods. As a result, Downtown is an increasingly popular destination to experience art and cultural activities, including viewing public art, attending art openings and festivals, or to enjoy a performance or traditional celebrations within a rich and enhanced urban setting. For these reasons, projects within Downtown should include public art and aspire to meet the following goals and guidelines:

### A. GOALS

Integrate public art in the overall vision of the project's architecture, landscape and open space design by incorporating the artist into the design team early in the process. The goals are as follows:

- **Artistic excellence.** Aim for the highest aesthetic standards by enabling artists to create original and sustainable artwork, with attention to design, materials, construction, and location, and in keeping with the best practices in maintenance and conservation.
- **Visibility.** Generate visual interest by creating focal points, meeting places, landmarks, modifiers or definers that will enhance Downtown's image locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.
- **Authenticity.** Enliven and enhance the unique quality of Downtown's sense of place, adding to its diverse visual and cultural environments. Provide meaningful opportunities for communities to participate in cultural planning, and for citizens and neighbors to identify and connect with each other through arts and culture in common areas.
- **Cultural literacy.** Foster common currency for social and economic

exchange between residents, and attract visitors by ensuring that they have access to visual 'clues' that will help them navigate and embrace a potentially unfamiliar environment. This can be further achieved through promotional materials and tours that enhance and expand upon the impact of public art installations.

- **Appropriateness.** Artworks must meet or exceed professional standards for visual art, ultimately adding to the relevancy and appreciation of the city's collection of public art and will illustrate themes and levels of sophistication that are appropriate for their location.
- **Responsiveness.** Without formally injecting art into the early stages of the planning process for each new development, it will either be left out, or appear out of sync with the overall growth of the built environment.

### B. GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. **All artwork erected in or placed upon City property must be approved by the Public Art Board. In cases where artwork is erected or placed upon private properties located within a designated historic districts or historic overlay districts, approvals must be approved by the Public Art Board and the Historic and Design Review Commission.**



Fig 12.1 Torch of Friendship

2. *Artwork in privately owned developments should be fully integrated into the development's design, in the most accessible and visible locations. In addition to publicly accessible exterior locations, enclosed lobbies and roof top gardens are considered appropriate locations.*
3. *Artwork in retail streets and developments will need to be reviewed in relation to existing signage and shop frontage.*
4. *Attention should be paid to how the artwork will appear amidst mature landscaping.*
5. *Special care should be made to avoid locations where artworks may be damaged, such as the vehicular right of way.*

**C. CONTRIBUTING TO AN URBAN TRAIL**

Ideally, each Downtown neighborhood would develop an aesthetic “heart” with unique characteristics. It could be represented by a neighborhood boundary, main boulevard, business core or cultural corridor. The art that defines the heart can also branch out to offer connections that form an “Urban Trail.” This trail could provide physical and visible connections, a path of discovery using public art elements, as part of the following:

- Icons, gateways and emblems
- Civic buildings
- Street furnishings
- Plazas
- Parks, paseos and courtyards
- Façades and storefronts
- Transit shelters and hubs



**Fig 12.3** San Antonio Library



**Fig 12.4** Art Incorporated into Public Improvement Project



**Fig 12.2** Mural

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Amenity:** Aesthetic or other features of a development that increase its marketability or usability to the public.

**Arcade:** A passageway, one side of which is an open span of arches supporting a roof.

**Architectural Features:** These include, but are not limited to, the exterior details of a building or structure, such as the type, style, or color of roofs, windows, doors, and appurtenances.

Architectural features will include interior architectural features where the interior is authorized for review. (UDC)

**Architectural Style:** Useful tools for analyzing general types of historic resources that tend to be related to the building's era of construction and popular regional trends. See the architectural styles section of A Guide to San Antonio's Historic Resources. (UDC)

**Articulation:** The manner in which portions of a building form are expressed (materials, color, texture, pattern, modulation, etc.) and come together to define the structure.

**Block Face:** The properties abutting one (1) side of a street and lying between the two (2) nearest intersecting or intercepting streets, or nearest intersecting or intercepting street and/or railroad right-of-way, unsubdivided land, water course or city boundary. (UDC)

**Canopy:** A projection over a niche or doorway; often decorative or decorated. (UDC)

**Colonnade:** A covered walkway flanked by rows of columns.

**Compatibility:** The size and character of a building element relative to other elements around it. For example, the size and proportion of windows in a building façade are usually related to one another, the spaces between them, and the scale of surrounding buildings.

**Context:** The characteristics of the buildings, streetscape, and landscape that supports or surrounds a given building, site, or area such as predominance of period architecture or materials, wide sidewalks, or continuous and overhead weather protection, or consistent street trees.

**Cornice:** A projecting, ornamental molding along the top of a building, wall, etc., finishing or crowning it. (UDC)

**Design Principles:** A guiding concept as part of the overall project design development that reflects desirable characteristics of the urban environment, or responds to specific site and vicinity opportunities or constraints.

**Façade:** The exterior wall of a building exposed to public view or that wall viewed by persons not within the building; an exterior wall. (UDC)

**Fenestration:** Window treatment in a building or facade; an opening in a surface. (UDC)

**Gateway:** A principal or ceremonial point of entrance into a district or neighborhood.

**Grid:** Two or more intersecting sets of regularly spaced parallel lines. It generates a pattern of regularly spaced parts, such as a street grid.

**High-rise:** For the purposes of these Guidelines, any building more than 150 feet high.

**Lintel:** The piece of timber, stone, or metal that spans above an opening and supports the weight of the wall above it. (UDC)

**Low-rise:** For the purposes of these Guidelines, any building less than 50 feet high.

**Marquee:** A shelter projecting over an entrance frequently ornamental and of metal with or without glazing.

**Massing:** The three-dimensional bulk of a building height, width, and depth. (UDC)

**Mid-rise:** For the purposes of these Guidelines, any building between 50 feet and 150 feet.

**Modulation:** A stepping back or projecting forward of sections of a structure's façade within specified intervals of building width and depth, as a means of breaking up a structure's apparent bulk.

**Open Space:** An area that is intended to provide light and air, and is designed, depending upon the particular situation, for environmental, scenic or recreational purposes. Open space may include but need not be limited to: lawns, decorative plantings, bikeways, walkways, outdoor recreation areas, wooded areas, greenways and water courses. (UDC)

**Paseo:** an at-grade, pedestrian physical access and line of sight access between streets, and are public or semi-public in character.

**Pedestrian Orientation:** Development that is designed with a primary emphasis on the street, sidewalk and/or connecting walkway access to the site and building, rather than on auto access and parking lots. (UDC)

**Porte-cochere:** A roofed structure attached to a building and extending over a driveway, allowing vehicles to pass through. (UDC)

**Proportion:** The balanced relationship of parts of a building, landscape, and structures to each other and to the whole.

**Public Realm:** The area between buildings, on the ground as well as above ground.

## GLOSSARY OF STANDARDS

### SIDEWALKS AND SETBACKS (Reference: Chapter 2)

1. Provide a minimum 48 inch wide continuous pedestrian path of travel as seen in Figure 2.1.
2. Provide continuous landscaped and hardscaped parkways adjacent to the curb on predominantly non-commercial streets
3. Trees shall be planted in tree wells within tree grates that are at least 5 feet long and a minimum of 5' feet wide.

### GROUND FLOOR TREATMENT (Reference: Chapter 3)

1. Locate active uses along the street façade to enhance the building's relationship to the public realm. Uses include: lobbies, dining rooms, seating areas, offices, retail stores, community or institutional uses, and residences.
2. Ground floor retail space shall be provided to a depth of at least 25 feet from the front façade and shall include an average 14 foot to 0 inch floor-to-ceiling height, with heights above 14 feet being very desirable.
3. The primary entrance to each street-level tenant that does not have its frontage along a public street shall be provided from a pedestrian paseo, courtyard or plaza, which is connected to the public street or alley.
4. Wall openings, such as storefront windows and doors, shall comprise at least 70 percent of a commercial building's street and river level façade as seen in Figure 3.2.
5. Clear glass for wall openings, i.e., doors and windows, shall be used along all street-level commercial façades for maximum transparency, especially in conjunction with retail and hotel uses as illustrated in Figure 3.3. Dark tinted, reflective or opaque glazing is not permitted for any required wall opening along commercial street level facades  
A building's primary entrance, defined as the entrance which provides the most direct access to a building's main lobby and is kept unlocked during business hours, shall be located on a public street or on a courtyard, plaza or paseo that is connected to and visible from a public street or the River Walk.
6. At least one building entrance/exit, which may be either a building or tenant and resident entrance, shall be provided along each street frontage.
7. Awnings and canopies shall be fabricated of woven fabric, glass, metal or other permanent material compatible with the building's architecture

### PARKING AND ACCESS (Reference: Chapter 4)

1. Locate off-street parking behind or below buildings as seen in Figure 4.2 and 4.3.
2. Vehicular access shall be from an alley, sidewalk or mid-block on a street as illustrated in Figure 4.5.
3. Curb cuts and parking and loading entries into buildings shall be limited to the minimum number required and the minimum width permitted.
4. Where a vehicular exit from a parking structure is located within five (5) feet of the back of sidewalk, a visual and audible alarm and enhanced paving shall be installed to warn pedestrians and cyclists of exiting vehicles.
5. Parking structures shall have an external skin designed to improve visual character when exposed to prominent public view. This can include heavy-gage metal screen, pre-cast concrete panels; live green wall (landscaped) laminated glass or photovoltaic panels. Figure 4.6 illustrates an unacceptable external skin.
6. No existing alley shall be vacated for a project if 1) vehicular access to the project is otherwise provided; and 2) vacating the alley will result in the need for additional curb cuts for other parcels on the same block.

ON-SITE OPEN SPACE (Reference: Chapter 6)

1. Provide landscaping and seating in each open space type as follows: paseo, courtyards, plazas, roof terraces.
2. Ensure anti-skateboard and anti-graffiti design features, pedestrian-scaled signage that identifies uses and shops, site furniture, art work, or amenities such as fountains, seating, and kiosks.
3. Utilize buildings, colonnades and landscaping to define edges and create a sense of three-dimensional containment to urban open spaces and plazas.

ARCHITECTURAL DETAIL (Reference: Chapter 7)

1. Provide well-marked entrances to cue access and use. Enhance all public entrances to a building through the use of compatible architectural or graphic treatment. Main building entrances shall read differently from retail storefronts, restaurants, and commercial entrances.
2. San Antonio has strong sun conditions. Use deep reveals to get shadow lines
3. Reinforce a building's entry with one or more of the following architectural treatments:
  - a. extra-height lobby space;
  - b. distinctive doorways;
  - c. decorative lighting;
  - d. distinctive entry canopy;
  - e. projected or deep recessed entry bay;
  - f. building name and address integrated into the facade;
  - g. artwork integrated into the facade or sidewalk;
  - h. a change in paving material, texture, or color within the property line;
  - i. distinctive landscaping, including plants, water features and seating.
4. Windows are to be as transparent as possible at the ground floor of the building, with preference given to grey, low-e glass (88 percent light transmission).
5. Parking and security lights shall not provide spillover to neighboring residential properties.
6. Exterior roll-down doors and security grills are not permitted in downtown except as approved by the Historic and Design Review Commission.
7. Ventilation intakes and exhausts shall be located to minimize adverse pedestrian impacts along the sidewalk.
8. No fixture shall be directed at the window of a residential unit either within or adjacent to a project.

STREETSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS (Reference: Chapter 8)

1. Improvement projects undertaken by public agencies, shall comply with the Complete Street Policy (<http://www.sanantonio.gov/planning/regionalplanning/>)
2. Sidewalks shall be paved with a slip resistant surface such as medium broom finish concrete.
3. Asphalt is not permitted for public sidewalks in downtown.
4. Crosswalks are to be provided at all types of street intersection configurations, including Xs, Ts and Ls.
5. Obtain a permit prior to pruning and adhere to International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) Tree Pruning Guidelines and American National Standards Institute (ANSI) A300 standards. These guidelines prohibit "topping" and "heading."
6. The street light pole shall be Valmont Tapered 16 Flat Fluting or similar. The pole shall be steel and be between 25 to 32 feet high.
  - a. Pole base diameter shall be eight (8) inches. The mast arm shall be four (4) to six (6) foot "Windsor" or similar.
7. Site furniture must be well designed to encourage their use, be able to withstand the elements, and situated in appropriate locations and shaded, clustered in groupings near site features like fountains and in plazas, etc.
8. Site furniture on walkways and sidewalks shall maintain a clear passage for pedestrians and shall be placed to eliminate potential pedestrian and vehicular conflicts.
9. Design the lower portion of the buildings to support human-scaled streetscapes, open spaces and quality pedestrian environments. *This can be achieved with fine-grain architectural*

*design and detailing, quality materials, and through the use of human-scaled elements such as landscaping, site furnishings, awnings, and canopies.*

10. Prohibited street furnishings in downtown. The following street furnishings are prohibited within the publicly owned portion of the right of way adjacent to streets or the River Walk:
  - a. Vending machines
  - b. Automatic teller machines
  - c. Pay phones
  - d. Photo booths
  - e. Automated machines such as, but not limited to, blood pressure machines, fortune-telling machines, video games, animated characters and other machines that are internally illuminated, or have moving parts, or make noise, or have flashing lights.
  - f. Inanimate figures such as horses, kangaroos, bears, gorillas, mannequins or any such animals, cartoon or human figure. This does not apply to public art approved by the Public Art Board.

SAN ANTONIO RIVER WALK (Reference: Chapter 9)

1. When a property is situated in such a manner as to appear to be the terminus at the end of the street or at a prominent curve in the river, the building shall incorporate into its design an architectural feature that will provide a focal point at the end of the view.
2. Treatment of architectural facades shall contain a discernable pattern of mass to void, or windows and doors to solid walls. Openings shall appear in a regular pattern, or be clustered to form a cohesive design. Architectural elements such as columns, lintels, sills, canopies, windows and doors shall align with other architectural features on the adjacent facades.
3. Align at least one (1) horizontal building element with another horizontal building element on the same block face. It will be considered to be within alignment if it is within three (3) feet, measured vertically, of the existing architectural element.
4. Building massing shall be so designed as to provide direct sunlight to vegetation in the river channel.
5. The building facade facing the river shall have at least 50 percent of the river level facade area devoted to display windows and/or windows affording some view into the interior areas. Multi-family residential buildings with no retail or office space are exempt from this guideline.
6. Where a building facade faces the street or river and exceeds the maximum facade length allowed in River Improvement Overlay Districts (RIO) RIO-3, 30 foot length divide the facade of building into modules that express traditional dimensions by changing:
  - a. materials with each building module to reduce its perceived mass.
  - b. the height with each building module of a wall plane.
  - c. the roof form of each building module to help express the different modules of the building mass.
7. No height limits in RIO-3
8. Organize the mass of a building to provide solar access to the river:
  - a. One method of doing so is to step the building down toward the river when it is located in a position that would cast a shadow there.
  - b. Another method is to set the building back from the river a distance sufficient to avoid shading the water.
9. Designation of a development node provides for the ability to increase the building height by fifty (50) percent from the RIO requirements.
10. Utilize local materials and traditional building materials for primary wall surfaces. A minimum of seventy-five (75) percent of walls (excluding window fenestrations) must be composed of the following:
  - d. Modular masonry materials including brick, stone, and rusticated masonry block, tile, terra-cotta, structural clay tile and cast stone. Concrete masonry units (CMU) are not allowed as a finished material.
  - e. Other new materials that convey the texture, scale, and finish similar to traditional building materials.
  - f. Stucco and painted concrete when detailed to express visual interest and convey a sense of scale.
  - g. Painted or stained wood in a lap or shingle pattern.

5. The following materials are not permitted as primary building materials and may be used as a secondary material only:
  - a. Large expanses of high gloss or shiny metal panels.
11. Mirror glass panels. Glass curtain wall buildings are allowed in RIO-3 as long as the river and street levels comply with statement 1 above.
12. Chain link fences are not allowed on properties abutting the river
13. Paint or Finish Colors:
  - a. Use historic colors of indigenous building materials for properties that abut the Riverwalk area.
  - b. Use matte finishes instead of high glossy finishes on wall surfaces. Wood trim and metal trim may be painted with gloss enamel.
  - c. Bright colors may highlight entrances or architectural features.
14. Street Building façades that are taller than the street wall (60 feet) shall be articulated at the top of the street wall or stepped back in order to maintain the rhythm of the street wall.
15. Roof forms shall be used to conceal all mechanical equipment and to add architectural interest to the structure.
16. High rise buildings, more than 100 feet tall, shall terminate with a distinctive top or cap. This can be accomplished by:
  - a. reducing the bulk of the top 20 percent of the building by 10 percent
  - b. by stepping back the top 20 percent of the building
  - c. changing the material of the cap
17. Windows shall be recessed at least 2 inches within solid walls (not part of a curtain wall system).
18. Windows shall be used in hierarchy to articulate features on the façade and grouped to establish rhythms.
19. Curtain wall systems shall be designed with modulating features such as projecting horizontal and/or vertical mullions.
20. Entrances shall be equally prominent on the street side as on the river side.
21. Entrances shall be placed so as to be highly visible.
22. Entrances shall have a change in material and/or wall plane.
23. Secondary entrances shall have architectural features that are subordinate to the primary entrance in scale and detail.
24. Stone detailing shall be rough hewn, and chiseled faced
25. Facades on the riverside shall be asymmetrical, pedestrian scale, and not give the appearance of the “back of a building” but designed with simpler details, and appear less formal than the street facades.
26. The awning, arcade or canopy shall be located in relationship to the openings of a building. That is, if there are a series of awnings or canopies, they shall be located at the window or door openings.
27. The maximum wall plane length within RIO-3 shall be 30 feet and building shall employ at least two of the following techniques:
  - a. Change materials with each building module to reduce the perceived mass, or;
  - b. Change the height of a wall plane or building module. The change in height shall be at least 10 percent of the vertical height, or;
  - c. Change roof form to help express the different modules of the building mass, or;
  - d. Change the arrangement of windows and other façade articulation features, such as columns or strap work, which divides large wall planes into smaller components.
28. Minimize the Potential for Erosion at the Riverbank. Grade slopes at a stable angle not to exceed 4:1 and provide plant material that will stabilize the soil such as vigorous ground covers, vines or turf planting that are native and noninvasive species as found on the permissible plant list maintained by the Parks and Recreation Department
29. Where above ground storm water management facilities are required, such facilities shall be multi-purpose amenities.
30. Site lighting shall be shielded by permanent attachments to light fixtures so that the light sources are not visible from a public way and any offsite glare is prevented.
31. Outdoor spaces adjoining and visible from the river right-of-way shall have average ambient light levels of between one (1) and three (3) foot-candles with a minimum of 0.5-foot-candles

- and a maximum of six (6) foot-candles at any point measured on the ground plane. Interior spaces visible from the river right-of-way on the river level and ground floor level shall use light sources with no more than the equivalent lumens of a one hundred-watt incandescent bulb. Exterior balconies, porches and canopies adjoining and visible from the river right-of-way shall use light sources with the equivalent lumens of a sixty-watt incandescent bulb with average ambient light levels no greater than the lumen output of a one hundred-watt incandescent light bulb as long as average foot candle standards are not exceeded. Accent lighting of landscape or building features including specimen plants, gates, entries, water features, art work, stairs, and ramps may exceed these standards by a multiple of 2.5. Recreational fields and activity areas that require higher light levels must be screened from the river hike and bike pathways with a landscape buffer.
32. All signs within the downtown "D" district shall conform to all City codes and must have recommendation of the DPCD and HDRC prior to approval.
  33. Permits must be obtained following approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness.
  34. No sign shall be painted, constructed, erected, remodeled, refaced, relocated, expanded or otherwise altered until it has been approved and a permit has been obtained from the Development Services Department in accordance with the provisions of this section and applicable city code provision.
  35. All graphic elements shall reinforce the architectural integrity of any building.
  36. Freestanding signs are allowed provided the sign does not interfere with pedestrian or vehicular traffic. Freestanding signs shall be perpendicular to the street, two sided and no taller than six (6) feet. Freestanding signs shall not be located in the right of way.
  37. For all signage, signage width and height must be in proportion to the facade, respecting the size, scale and mass of the facade, building height, and rhythms and sizes of window and door openings. The building façade shall be considered as part of an overall sign program but the sign shall be subordinate to the overall building composition.

SIGNAGE (Reference: Chapter 10)

1. Projects involving new building construction must submit a conceptual signage plan with the building elevation plans for design review and approval before individual signs will be reviewed. The sign plan shall address:
  - a. Proposed location of signage;
  - b. General dimensions of signage area; and
  - c. Design & materials guidelines, including colors, letter size, illumination method, etc.
2. To qualify for a Sign Master Plan an area must:
  - a. Include two (2) or more contiguous lots, which may be separated by a street or drainage rights-of-way, which are not included in any other Sign Master Plan Agreement.
  - b. The owners of all lots within the Sign Master Plan Agreement must agree in writing that neither they nor their successors in ownership shall exceed the maximum height, square footage and number on any of the lots within the plan.
  - c. All existing signs within the Sign Master Plan Agreement must be in conformance with this article.
3. Electrical transformer boxes and raceways are required to be concealed from public view.
4. All fascia signage shall be integrated into the architecture.
5. The signage material will be weather proof and fade resistant.
6. No signs shall be located between 20 feet above sidewalk elevation and 40 feet above sidewalk elevation to avoid conflicts with the tree canopy, except where the applicant demonstrates that no conflict will occur.
7. Trees may not be topped or headed back on the sides to expose signs.
8. Signs shall use appropriate means of illumination. These include: neon tubes, fiber optics, incandescent lamps, cathode ray tubes, shielded spotlights and wall wash fixtures.

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN (Reference: Chapter 11)

1. All projects must comply with the City's Green Building Ordinance Build San Antonio Green (BSAG).
2. Projects that preserve or rehabilitate historic structures must be reviewed with the City of San Antonio Historic Design Guidelines.
3. All artwork erected in or placed upon City property must be approved by the Public Art Board. In cases where artwork is erected or placed upon private properties located within a designated historic districts, approvals must be approved by the Public Art Board and the Historic and Design Review Commission.